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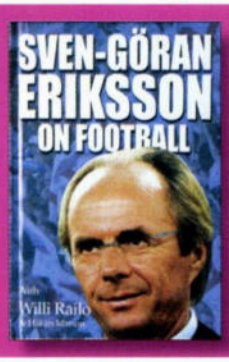

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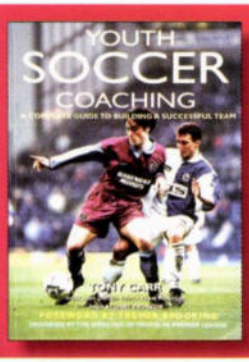

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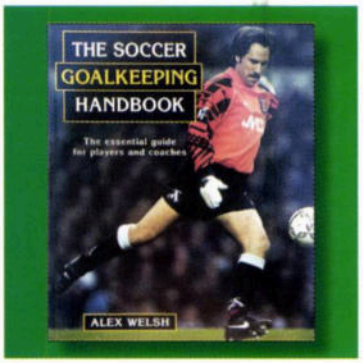

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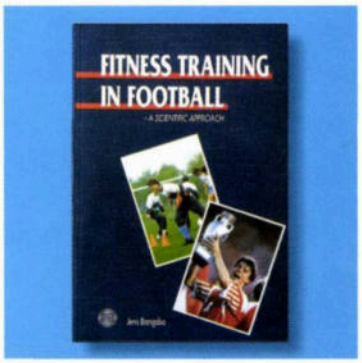

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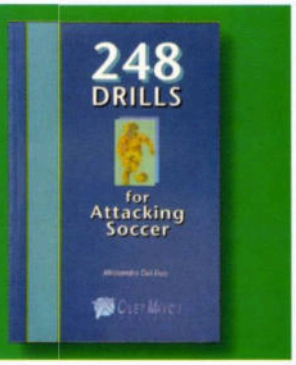

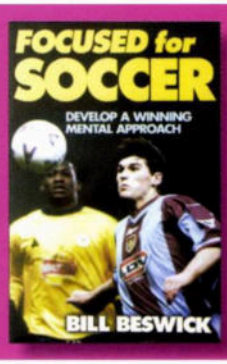

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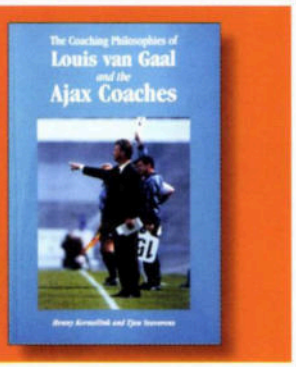

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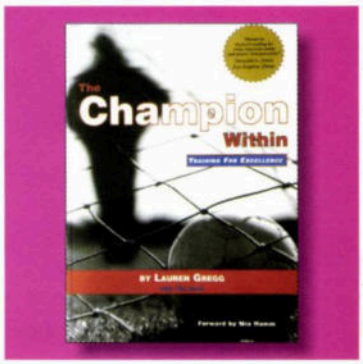

MAY 2002 VOL.42 NO.8
Cover: Francesco Totti (Italy)

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Europe/Eire (inc. VAT): £43 (airmail)
USA: £54 (airmail)
Australia, Far East, Asia, Africa: £58.30 (airmail)
Rest of world: £54 (airmail)
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May 2002

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Spotlight on Brazil's World Cup hero of 1994. *Page* 4

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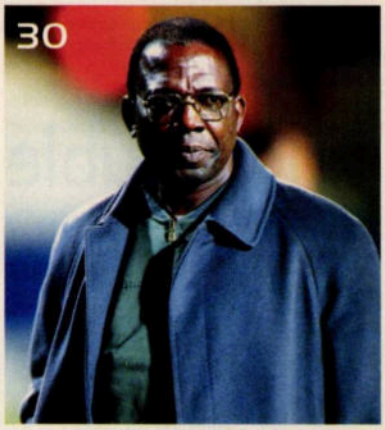
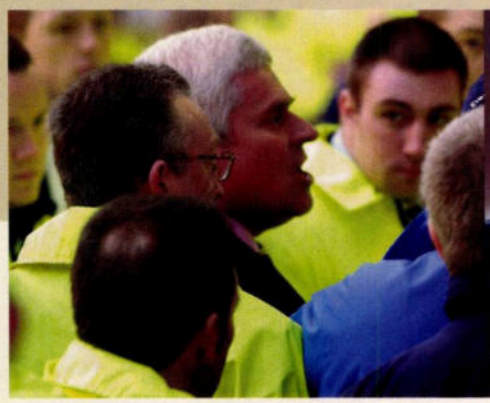


WITH THE WORLD CUP a matter of weeks away, we have turned the spotlight this month on the coaches of the 32 finalists. Most were more than happy to speak to *World Soccer* – especially as most make themselves available to the media on a regular basis through their federation press officers. A couple delayed because of family illness and in one case a bereavement, while another – Henri Michel of Tunisia – quit days before we went to press. This may be highly ironic given that we are a London-based magazine, but the most difficult coach to pin down to interview – by a mile – was Sven Goran Eriksson. The England coach, who earns more than any other national team manager, only agreed to speak to *World Soccer* on the condition that we mention the computer game he is currently endorsing.

Next month, we turn our attentions to the players, the personalities who will ultimately decide the fate of the men featured in this issue. Our World Cup special – all 156 pages of it – will carry a higher cover price (£3.50), although as with previous collectors' editions, subscribers will get their copy at no extra cost.

I make no apology for focusing wholeheartedly on the World Cup in this issue and next month's special. Our monthly deadlines, combined with the tight schedule of the Champions League, has made it impossible for us to preview any of the final stages of this season's Champions League and UEFA Cup. The June issue, on sale on May 31, will make up for this omission.

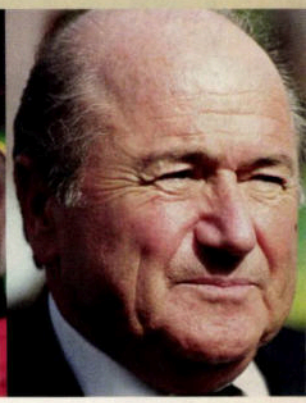
Gavin Hamilton, Editor (gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com)



● 03/03/02...Leeds chairman Peter Ridsdale (centre) receives a police warning after confronting angry fans following his team's disappointing 0-0 draw with Everton

● 05/03/02...Belgium striker Bob Peeters is likely to miss the World Cup with a foot injury

● 06/03/02...European champions Bayern Munich are reported to be interested in signing Cameroon captain Rigobert Song, currently on loan at Koln



● 07/03/02...FIFA's executive committee votes to investigate the organisation's finances, against the wishes of under-fire president Sepp Blatter

The trouble with Romario

Brazil's 1994 World Cup hero continues to be overlooked by national coach Scolari. Tim Vickery reports

BRAZIL'S press conferences have invented a new way to calculate the shortest period of time known to man. It is the gap between coach Luiz Felipe Scolari completing the list of his chosen players and the first radio journalist yelling 'Romario is out' into his microphone.

The man at the eye of the storm, meanwhile, catches some shut-eye. "If the press conference was earlier I'd watch it on TV," said Romario on the eve of the call-up for last month's game against Yugoslavia. "But at midday I'm always sleeping."

It is just as well the Vasco da Gama striker chose not to disrupt his normal routine. He has not played for Brazil since Scolari's first game in charge, a 1-0 defeat to Uruguay last July. And once more he was left out of a list that, according to the coach, includes 90 per cent of the World Cup squad.

Could Romario, now 36, be part of the missing 10 per cent? Scolari is not saying. He now refuses to comment on Romario and instead keeps track of the number of times he has been asked about him in press conferences (116, by his record).

"I don't want to waste my question," began one journalist before launching into a plea for Scolari to explain Romario's continued absence. "You wasted your question," was the coach's curt reply.

But stonewalling will not make the issue go away. Romario, by some distance the biggest star in domestic Brazilian football, cannot be ignored.

Clearly, Scolari would rather not have him around. But that might not be enough to keep him out. There are powerful forces to be negotiated on the way to the World Cup.

One, of course, is public opinion, suitably inflamed every time Romario scores for his club. The Vasco striker has become a focal point for protest during Brazil's games and training sessions. Scolari even kicked one fan who was demanding Romario's presence.

Such popularity gives a player commercial value. Romario is sponsored by one soft drinks company, the Brazil team by another. Can a solution be found to leave everyone sweet?

These matters were almost certainly on the agenda at a bizarre recent meeting between Romario and Brazilian FA president Ricardo Teixeira.

Under fire from the conclusions of last year's anti-corruption inquiry, Teixeira's interests are unclear. It may be that the heat is off him while the Scolari-Romario controversy hogs the headlines. But it could also be true that a poor World Cup without Romario would have disastrous political consequences for Brazilian football's beleaguered power structure.

In an unguarded moment, Scolari commented that the striker had been left out for 'tactical reasons' – presumably a reference to the coach's preference for a tall target man coupled with a speed merchant who favours the flanks.

The Brazilian public have been brought up on more imaginative methods. Romario offers a reassuring dose of more traditional talent, scoring his goals with a quick mind and a sleight of foot. Whether he can still score them at the highest level is unknown. So is the answer to whether he can last throughout a competition as intense as the World Cup.

At its heart, though, the whole issue is not about age. The Scolari-Romario stand-off puts its finger on one of football's most fascinating fault lines: the conflict between individual and collective glory. "We have a harmonious group now," says Scolari. "The atmosphere in the camp is much better than when I took over." It is a barb aimed at Romario, whom the coach inherited as team captain.

Getting stars to pull together can often be a problem. Last year Romario and Rivaldo played together three times for Brazil. Not once did playmaker pass to striker. It is hardly surprising, then, that the games brought two defeats and a draw.

"At Vasco the team is set up for Romario to score," said Scolari. "Are the national team prepared to do it?"

It gave Romario an easy defence strategy. He simply pointed to the number of senior international goals he has scored – 53. But it is becoming harder to believe that he will be given the opportunity to add to that total.

Centre of attention...Romario is still a huge draw for fans and media alike

The month in pictures

● 08/03/02…Christian Vieri extends his contract with Internazionale until 2006

● 08/03/02…PSG coach Luis Fernandez receives a six-month touchline ban after clashing with officials during the League Cup semi-final defeat by Bordeaux

● 10/03/02…Chelsea are convincing winners of the all-London FA Cup quarter-final, beating Spurs 4-0 at White Hart Lane. However, Graeme Le Saux is sent off for taking a swipe at Mauricio Taricco

Last stand...Romario has not played for Brazil since Scolari's first game in charge, a 1-0 defeat by Uruguay in July 2001

NOTES AND QUOTES

"Since he left, we have no real playmaker, no number 10."
David Trezeguet regrets Zinedine Zidane's departure from Juventus to Real Madrid.

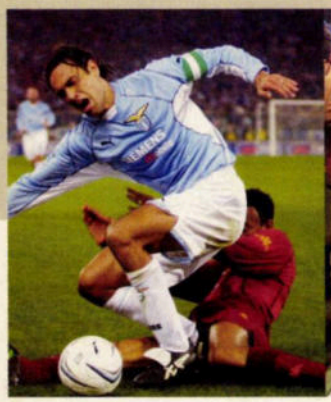
"Rod Stewart told me to move to England, and I'm likely to follow his advice."
Bayern Munich's Stefan Effenberg takes counsel from a famous Scotland supporter.

I'll wear it well...Effenberg for England?

"It would have been better for him to wait for a big club to offer him a job."
Italy boss Giovanni Trapattoni on Lothar Matthaus' problems as Rapid Wien coach.

"We would stay in a bar until four in the morning and then play better than those who had slept all night."
Russian striker Sergei Yuran talks of his days in Portugal with Benfica and FC Porto.

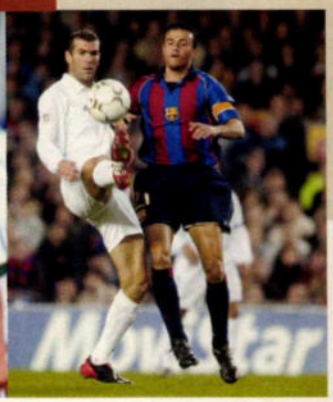
The month in pictures



● 11/03/02...Lazio captain Alessandro Nesta accepts he was at fault for three first-half goals conceded in his team's 5-1 thrashing by Roma

● 13/03/02...Riot police are called in to restore order following a mass brawl at the end of Roma's Champions League game against Galatasaray

● 15/03/02...New South Africa coach Jomo Sono leaves out captain Shaun Bartlett from the squad to face Saudi Arabia in a friendly



● 19/03/02...Zinedine Zidane scores in his first Real Madrid-Barcelona game, but Barça snatch a fortunate equaliser and the game ends 1-1

INTERCLUBNET World Soccer PLAYER OF THE MONTH

URUGUAY'S Alvaro Recoba reminded the game of his talent when he helped inspire his country to their World Cup qualifying play-off victory over Australia. He then picked up the threads of a scandal-hit Italian League career with Internazionale in time to score match-winning doubles in successive Serie A victories over Lecce and then – crucially – champions Roma. *(See also profile, page 61.)*

Identity card

Name Alvaro Recoba
Club Internazionale (Milan)
Nationality Uruguayan
EU passport No
Age 26
Position Second striker/attacking midfielder
Squad number 20
Favoured foot Left
Contract expires 2006

Date of birth 17/03/76
Place of birth Montevideo
Height 179cm
Weight 79kg

Intl apps 40
Intl goals 8
Career apps 193
Career club goals 74

Honours
UEFA Cup: 1998 (Inter squad)

This season (League only)
Appearances 13
Goals 5

League career (season, club, games, goals – top div unless stated)
1994 Danubio 14 - 6
1995 Danubio 20 - 5
1996 Nacional 22 - 8
1997 Nacional 11 - 9
1997-98 Inter 8 - 3
1998-99 Inter 1 - 0
Venezia 19 - 11
1999-00 Inter 27 - 10
2000-01 Inter 29 - 8

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The month in pictures

● 18/03/02...Harry Kewell of Leeds is voted Oceania's Footballer of the Year

● 20/03/02...Marcelo Zalayeta heads home as Juventus beat Arsenal 1-0. The result means the Gunners miss out on the Champions League last eight

● 21/03/02...Gabriel Batistuta blames coach Fabio Capello's tactics for Roma's European exit

● 22/03/02...Patrik Andersson welcc Barça being paired with Panathina

Paul Gardner

GLOBAL VIEW

Eurocentrics don't understand Blatter

DAILY, almost hourly it seems, come the anti-Blatter stories from Europe.

Blatter in trouble, Blatter harassed, Blatter isolated, Blatter embattled, Blatter beleaguered. Blatter in disgrace, Blatter most definitely out of FIFA, maybe even Blatter in jail.

Good hard-hitting stuff, but you have to wonder whether anyone was paying attention a mere 10 months ago when Blatter was also under attack by this same group of determined European anti-Blatterites.

The occasion was the FIFA Congress in Buenos Aires. Blatter was to be taken down a peg, grilled about his handling of FIFA finances, and ultimately humiliated by being forced to answer the famous 25 Questions.

The result of that attempt to derail Blatter's career was that Blatter got a standing ovation from the Congress. It was his opponents who suffered humiliation.

The Buenos Aires episode made two things inescapably clear: firstly, that Blatter is much cleverer, much quicker and much cannier than his opponents in his mastery of FIFA politics; secondly, that those opponents were blithely unaware of this.

This was not the first time they had fatally underrated Blatter. They made an even bigger blunder at the time of the 1998 election in Paris, when their man, the Swede Lennart Johansson, was supposed to romp home.

That led to the farcical sight of Johansson up there on the platform, beaming away as though he had won, utterly unable to take in the bitter truth that his dream of becoming FIFA president was over.

Even that fiasco was not the first miscue. Johansson and co had already made asses of themselves in March 1998 by demanding that Blatter resign as general secretary before the election. An ill-considered move, not supported by FIFA statutes. When the motion was withdrawn in favour of a weaker version that would have suspended Blatter from certain duties, Johansson was asked which duties he had in mind? No list had been prepared. Johansson's motion was quickly shot down.

> 'The collapse of these anti-Blatter moves undoubtedly owes much to the refusal to take Blatter seriously. But the debacles also contain a powerful element of arrogance'

That these various anti-Blatter moves should repeatedly collapse undoubtedly owes much to the refusal to take Blatter seriously. But the debacles also contain a powerful element of arrogance.

Hence the disbelief when Blatter won the 1998 election.

Couldn't be...he must have cheated. The rumours of bribery and corruption started at once – exactly similar rumours, it's worth noting, to those that circulated when Joao Havelange became the first non-European FIFA president in 1974.

One of Johansson's themes during his 1998 campaign was that "the FIFA presidency should return to Europe". That, I suppose, would go down well with most European nations, of which there are 51. But what of the non-European countries, of whom there are three times as many?

A claim that European power – already dominant – should be further increased was bound to be viewed with great scepticism, if not outright alarm, by those 153 nations.

An offensive whiff of paternalism arises – the belief that Europe is all that matters, that Europe knows best, and the rest of the world will fall meekly into line.

Before he left office, Havelange had something to say about what he saw as the source of such arrogance, putting his finger firmly on the danger that such a Eurocentric course carries: "Germany is very ambitious and seeks, through UEFA, to dominate world soccer by taking the FIFA presidency."

The current accusations against Blatter – that he is in effect covering up, in some yet to be identified way, a huge FIFA deficit – have the same tinge of slipshod preparation about them as the other charges brought by Johansson, none of which has been proved.

As for the internal audit committee set up – over Blatter's objections – to look into FIFA's finances, Johansson seems to believe that a seething morass of falsification and corruption will be uncovered. I think it much more likely that things will be found to be in order. Not ideal, but in order (ideal would be unlikely after the ISL collapse – and not even his opponents have yet pinned that on Blatter).

In which case, yet another unproven charge must surely, at last, lead to some questioning of the jovial Johansson's credibility. The charges against Blatter begin to look as if they come from the 'if you throw enough mud some will stick' school.

Blatter, as one would expect, has been careful not to launch any specific accusations, talking only of "a destabilisation and defamation campaign against my person that has been ongoing for some time".

I have portrayed a Sepp Blatter who has so far outsmarted his opponents with ease (maybe not too astounding, their ineptitude has been monumental). But Blatter's cleverness is double-edged; it spreads, damagingly, into all areas of his FIFA life.

He may well be bright enough to be the president of FIFA and still retain all the hands-on powers he had as general secretary. This seems to be his style, but it is one that many FIFA nations – not just the Europeans – find objectionable.

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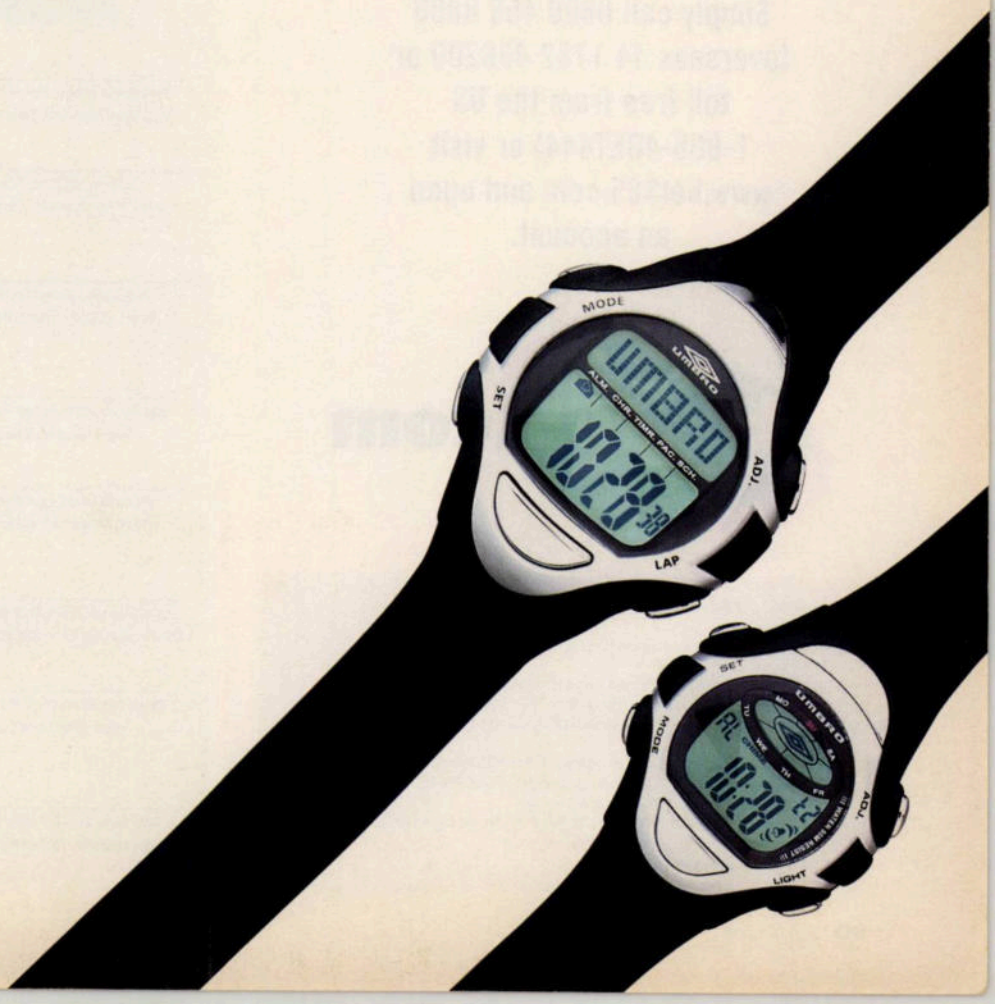

The month in pictures

● 25/03/02...Internazionale clash with the Brazilian federation over the release of Ronaldo for Brazil's friendly against Yugoslavia

● 26/03/02...Bayern Munich's Alexander Zickler will miss the World Cup with a thigh injury

● 27/03/02...Cameroon and Argentina draw 2-2 in a friendly in Zurich. Veron and Aimar score for Argentina; Eto'o and Suffo for Cameroon

● 28/03/02...Leeds admit that Mark Viduka could be sold this summer – if the price is right

● 30/03/02...Pablo Aimar's winning goal at Tenerife keeps Valencia level at the top in Spain

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ESM ELEVEN

EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES

TEAM OF THE MONTH – MARCH 2002

HOW THEY LINE UP

Toldo (Internazionale, 4 votes); Panucci (Roma, 2), Hyypia (Liverpool, 4), Hierro (Real Madrid, 2), Riise (Liverpool, 5); Ballack (Bayer Leverkusen, 4), Seedorf (Internazionale, 4), Recoba (Internazionale, 7), Pires (Arsenal, 4); Diego Tristan (Deportivo La Coruna, 4), Montella (Roma, 4)

A BOLA (POR)

Kahn (Bayern Munich); Hierro (Real Madrid), Blanc (Manchester United), Cordoba (Internazionale), Roberto Carlos (Real Madrid); Ballack (Bayer Leverkusen), Gerrard (Liverpool), Pires (Arsenal); Recoba (Internazionale), Van Hooijdonk (Feyenoord), Montella (Roma)

DON BALON (SPA)

Toldo (Internazionale); Sebescen (Bayer Leverkusen), Hyypia (Liverpool), Blanc (Manchester United), Riise (Liverpool); Ballack (Bayer Leverkusen), Seedorf (Internazionale), Solari (Real Madrid); Diego Tristan (Deportivo La Coruna), Montella (Roma), Van Hooijdonk (Feyenoord)

FOOT (BLG)

Dudek (Liverpool); Nowotny (Bayer Leverkusen), Hierro (Real Madrid), Riise (Liverpool); Seedorf (Internazionale), Ramelow (Bayer Leverkusen), Valeron (Deportivo La Coruna), Pires (Arsenal); Diego Tristan (Deportivo La Coruna), Vieri (Internazionale), Recoba (Internazionale)

LA GAZZETTA DELLO SPORT (ITA)

Toldo (Internazionale); Panucci (Roma), Ivan Helguera (Real Madrid), Hyypia (Liverpool), Riise (Liverpool); Seedorf (Internazionale), Gerrard (Liverpool), Ballack (Bayer Leverkusen), Solari (Real Madrid); Recoba (Internazionale), Trezeguet (Juventus)

KICKER (GER)

Toldo (Internazionale); Puyol (Barcelona), Ayala (Valencia), Hyypia (Liverpool), Placente (Bayer Leverkusen); Beckham (Manchester United), Karagounis (Panathinaikos), Mauro Silva (Deportivo La Coruna), Ze Roberto (Bayer Leverkusen); Heskey (Liverpool), Recoba (Internazionale)

SPORT EXPRESS (RUS)

Seaman (Arsenal); Bridge (Southampton), Materazzi (Internazionale), Abel Xavier (Liverpool); Pires (Arsenal), Seedorf (Internazionale), Ballack (Bayer Leverkusen), Izmailov (Lokomotiv Moscow); Diego Tristan (Deportivo La Coruna), Recoba (Internazionale), Montella (Roma)

VOETBAL INTERNATIONAL (HOL)

Dudek (Liverpool); Evanilson (Borussia Dortmund), Cordoba (Internazionale), Hyypia (Liverpool), Riise (Liverpool); Pires (Arsenal), Valeron (Deportivo La Coruna), Bergkamp (Arsenal), Recoba (Internazionale); Diego Tristan (Deportivo La Coruna), Van Hooijdonk (Feyenoord)

WORLD SOCCER (UK)

Toldo (Internazionale); Panucci (Roma), Naybet (Deportivo La Coruna), Materazzi (Internazionale), Riise (Liverpool); Mauro Silva (Deportivo La Coruna), Recoba (Internazionale), Valeron (Deportivo La Coruna), Benjamin (Betis); Montella (Roma), Litmanen (Liverpool)

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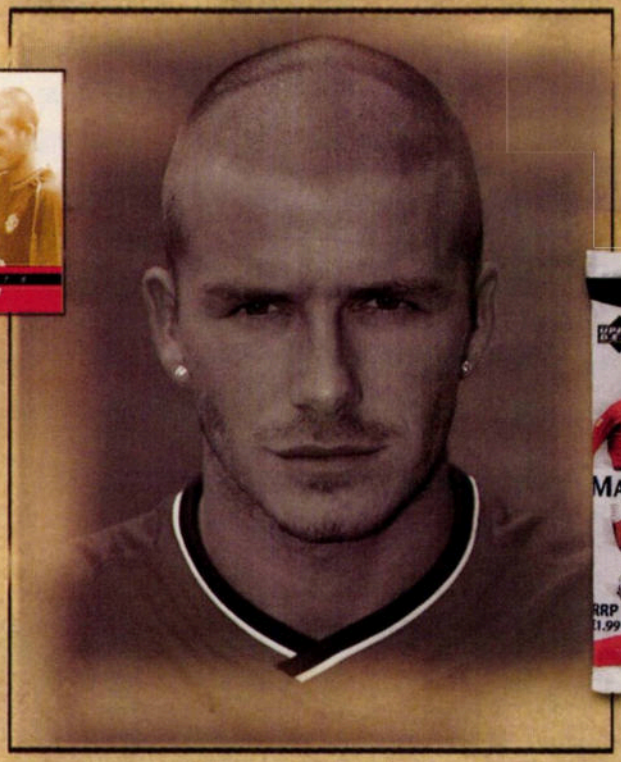

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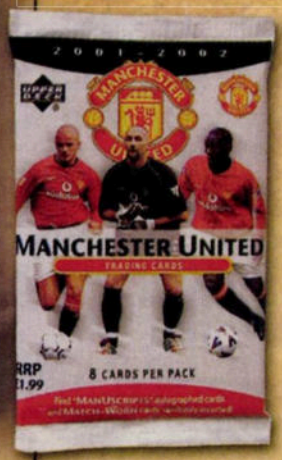

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The gloves are off

Issa Hayatou takes on Sepp Blatter for the FIFA presidency in Seoul in May. Keir Radnedge hears the views of the president of the Confederation of African Football, who is backed by leading figures in Europe and Asia

WITHIN a matter of weeks, Issa Hayatou could become the most powerful man in football. Hayatou, 55, from Cameroon, has been a quietly effective president of the African confederation since 1988. Now, at FIFA Congress in Seoul on the eve of the World Cup finals, he will challenge incumbent Sepp Blatter for the presidency of the world governing body.

Blatter's credibility has been damaged by the bankruptcy of FIFA's long-time commercial partner, ISL, and by allegations that will not go away concerning his controversial presidential victory over Sweden's Lennart Johansson in 1998.

Hayatou, a recently-elected member of the International Olympic Committee, succeeded Ethiopia's Ydnekatchew Tessema as CAF president in 1988 after an administrative career that began with a post as a physical education teacher. Leadership came as a family heirloom since an elder brother was Prime Minister of Cameroon in the early 1990s. Between 1976 and 1982, Hayatou was general secretary of the Cameroon football federation and was also Sports Minister from 1983 to 1987. Now he attempts to take that experience on to the world stage.

In January Blatter announced his intention to run again for the FIFA presidency. It seemed he might be unopposed. Then, a few days before the close of nominations, Hayatou decided to run on a 'clean up FIFA' ticket.

One other potential candidate, South Korea's Chung Mong-joon, has pledged to back Hayatou, while Johansson has promised as much European support as he can muster.

'It is now or never. Right now, I have support that might not be there in four years' time'

Smiling now...but Issa Hayatou and incumbent Sepp Blatter will campaign fiercely in their race for FIFA's top post

WORLD SOCCER: What is your primary purpose in running for the presidency of FIFA?

ISSA HAYATOU: If I am elected I will do everything possible to bring peace back to the world of football, rebuild the family feeling within FIFA and make sure we have transparency in the way the game is run at the highest level. I see it as my duty to try to achieve all that – and I think I have earned the right to be president of FIFA. After all, I have been president of a highly complex confederation in Africa for 14 years, and that must speak for something.

If you do not win this time, will you try again in 2006?

No, for me this is now or never. Right now, I have support that may not be there, for a variety of reasons, in four years' time. Who knows, for example, whether European football might have a candidate of its own ready to stand at Congress on the eve of the World Cup in Germany? Also, if I do not stand now when everything could be in my favour, who would consider me a credible candidate at a later date? No one – not even within Africa. That's why I had no doubt that this was the right time to throw my hat into the ring.

Do you accept that Blatter remains the favourite?

I understand that I am taking a risk. I know that Blatter and the people around him are confident he will win again. But if he had so much support, how come they did not stand up for him during our executive committee meetings in Zurich the other week?

How do you answer some of Blatter's supporters who say you will pick up only 30 or 40 votes?

Blatter has claimed he has 112 votes already committed to him. Maybe, maybe not. That was before there was any other candidate. Time will tell. On the other hand, if I am sure of around 40 votes before I have started campaigning seriously then Blatter could be in for a surprise. Certainly, I do not

expect him to secure as many votes from Africa as he did four years ago.

How did you feel when Blatter failed to deliver on his promise of an African nation hosting the World Cup in 2006?
It was the biggest disappointment of my tenure as African confederation president. I really hated what happened and how it happened – with Germany beating South Africa because the Oceania representative abstained on the final vote. Still, at least we are now assured that Africa will host the World Cup in 2010, and rotation means it will come round at least once every 20 years after that. It's something, I suppose.

If you want European support for your presidential bid, surely it would make sense to switch the African Nations Cup from January – right in the middle of the European season – to June or July. Would you consider that?
When I was elected as president of CAF originally in 1988, the Nations Cup was played in March, which is about the only month in Africa when it isn't raining somewhere. Under pressure from Europe we switched it to January because we understood that this fitted in with the European mid-winter break. Now the Europeans have changed and most of the leagues play now in January. Why should we keep on changing? Why should we allow ourselves to be kicked around like a football? There is no other possible date for us. If we scheduled the Nations Cup finals for June, July or August we'd risk having to scrap it in mid-tournament because that's most countries' rainy season.

Could you compromise by reducing the size of the Nations Cup finals from 16 teams back to 12 or even eight?
No way. We have two more member nations – 53 – than UEFA so we have every right to organise a finals tournament on the same timescale and with the same number of teams. We are doing all we can to help European clubs already because we have decided that the 2006 Nations Cup will double as qualifiers for that year's World Cup. Then the European clubs will have nothing to complain about in terms of there being too many calls on their players.

How do you view the stance of European clubs in regard to the release of African players for national team duties?
I find it appalling. Some European clubs are guilty of bad faith. I know, for example, that some players are told that a renewal of their contract depends on them refusing to go to the Nations Cup. Others are released only at the last minute by their clubs, which complicates life for their national coaches. What always amazes me is that everyone knows the dates of the Nations Cup a year in advance. No club should be surprised if a player has to go off to play for his country when the time comes around.

Africa has five places at this year's World Cup finals. Do you want more in the future?
We are the second continent in terms of numbers. In Korea and Japan this year Europe will have 15 countries if you include France the holders, then Africa has five, the same as South America – and one of their teams (Uruguay) needed to win a play-off against Australia. We have made great strides but if we can't be allocated extra World Cup finals places then our countries will have to earn them with their results. It will not do our cause any good, for example, if all five African teams go out in the first round this year.

When do you think an African nation will win the World Cup?
As soon as possible, hopefully. But first everyone in African football must work extra hard to resolve all the internal squabbles that take up so much time and energy. Then our strongest nations can concentrate all their energies on making World Cup history. That's my dream.

'Blatter will decimate Hayatou'

JACK WARNER, from Trinidad and Tobago, has been president of CONCACAF for the past 12 years and is one of Sepp Blatter's most committed supporters. Here, in an exclusive interview with Keir Radnedge, he explains why he wants to see FIFA's president carry on in charge of the world governing body.

WORLD SOCCER: What's the context for the authority from which you speak about the world game?
JACK WARNER: I became president of the Caribbean federation in 1983 and the president of CONCACAF in 1990. In that time we have achieved an enormous amount in terms of administration, infrastructure, training, coaching and working with governments to improve facilities. There is still plenty to do, but it's a measure of our progress that we have become the only confederation that has hosted at least one FIFA championship in three successive years – the Women's World Cup in the USA and the Confederations Cup in Mexico in 1999, Futsal in Guatemala in 2000 and then the World Under-17 Championship in Trinidad and Tobago last year. Not many people realise this but when the English Football Association ran a coaching badge course recently at the Joao Havelange Centre of Excellence in Trinidad it was the first time they had done so outside of England. We are very proud of that.

In World Cup terms, CONCACAF used to mean Mexico and no one else. What's changed?
Everything has changed. It's not because Mexico has slipped back or its people have done anything wrong, but because all the other countries have improved by leaps and bounds. In this World Cup qualifying competition Mexico were fortunate. They only qualified because Trinidad and Tobago beat Honduras in the penultimate round of matches.

Is CONCACAF adequately represented with a mere three places at the World Cup finals?
Certainly not when you consider the number of countries we have, the improving standards of football, of refereeing and of administration. It's a sore point with me because increasing the number of finalists at the World Cup was my idea originally. I then suggested it to Joao Havelange when he was FIFA president. Yet all CONCACAF got out of increasing the number of finalists by eight, from 24 to 32, was half a place. That did not – and does not – do us justice. We are working to improve on that. The fact that the defending champions will no longer be guaranteed a place from 2006 offers us an opening. Then, it is also up to how our teams perform in the finals themselves. ▶

Taking a stand...CONCACAF president Jack Warner

Are you still in favour of a World Cup every two years?
Yes, I am. The present qualifying system, for example, is too protracted and complicated. People in UEFA were highly critical when Blatter raised the idea originally but UEFA must recognise the football world is changing, and Europe needs to change with it. They should see it makes a lot of sense.

In what ways?
If rotating the World Cup finals works properly then Europe will host the World Cup only once every 20 years. Will UEFA's members be satisfied with that? Of course not. Holding the World Cup every two years improves their chances. Also, a World Cup every two years is to the advantage of all the European clubs. They complain about releasing players – but if you have a World Cup every two years, a number of the other competitions will fall away or be simplified. The Africans, for example, are talking about letting the 2006 Nations Cup finals double up as qualifiers for the World Cup later that year. So a World Cup every two years would be good news for Europe, its clubs and players. It makes perfect sense.

You would want that addressed in the revision of FIFA statutes promised for 2004. Would that also address the four independent member nations of the United Kingdom?
Certainly – allowing the UK to have four national teams and four votes in FIFA is an absolute historical anachronism. Maybe the situation would have been a little different if David Will, the British vice-president on the FIFA executive, had been willing to stand aside for Geoff Thompson of the Football Association – because England is considered, naturally, as the major country in United Kingdom football. That did not happen and I think it could have serious consequences.

Who will win the FIFA presidential election?
I think Blatter will decimate Hayatou. It's a non-battle. There will be only one vote needed because Blatter will get 140 or 150 straight out. You know what Hayatou's failed candidacy will also do? It will push back by at least eight years the prospect of a non-European becoming president of FIFA again. Hayatou will not have the credibility to stand again. When you look at Blatter, you see, it's not just the four years he has had as FIFA president on which he will be judged but the 25 years he has spent working in FIFA.

How will the voting work out?
One important thing to bear in mind is that there are only two confederations that mandate all their members to vote in a block. One is our confederation, representing the Caribbean, Central and North America, and the other is CONMEBOL, representing the 10 South American countries. Of course, we in CONCACAF have not yet had our congress, but I have no doubt we will decide to support Blatter – just as the South Americans will. Our future is best served by backing Blatter, and it's interesting to see that great former players such as Franz Beckenbauer, Pele and Michel Platini all think the same way.

Why do you think Hayatou stands no chance?
When Lennart Johansson lost to Blatter four years ago it was because the rest of the game feared that he wanted FIFA to become too Euro-centric. Look at what has happened. Every event created by FIFA over the past few years has been opposed by UEFA – from the Confederations Cup to the World Club Championship. Hayatou was encouraged to stand by UEFA to protect UEFA's own interests – that's not only my opinion but that of many of my colleagues. Why is Hayatou equally or better qualified than Blatter to run FIFA? What has he ever done for the rest of the world's youth programmes, clubs or confederations?

Isn't it about financial transparency?
This is a lot of nonsense. I have been involved with FIFA for 20 years and at no time has its administration been run with more 'transparency' than now. Why do you think these questions about the finances have been raised now? I can tell you – it's all political.

What's the problem for UEFA then?
It's not for me to say how Lennart Johansson feels when he looks back to the election he lost to Blatter in 1998. But he has been president of UEFA about as long as I have been president of CONCACAF. If I looked at the sum of my work and saw what he must see then I would consider I had failed, because Johansson's legacy is a divided Europe. Doesn't it appear strange that UEFA cannot raise a credible candidate of its own? Doesn't it appear strange that UEFA is supporting an African candidate in Hayatou against a European in Blatter? Two of the most senior European representatives, Angel Maria Villar of Spain and Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder of Germany, have both brought their federations out behind Blatter. What does that tell the rest of the world about UEFA?

Korea's Chung Mong-joon is a strong supporter of Hayatou and UEFA. He has talked about standing himself. Isn't he a serious player?
Chung is a different case. He has his own domestic agenda, politically. I am not convinced by the 'Mr Clean' business. If Chung were serious about wanting to exert even greater influence in world football, then why did he not stand for the presidency of the Asian confederation earlier this year? Instead, Bin Hammam was elected unopposed.

What about the allegations relating to the buying of votes in the 1998 election?
You need ask only two questions about those allegations. Firstly, why did Farrah Addo and the Somalis wait nearly four years before speaking up? Secondly, who stands to gain most? One thing is clear to me: if Hayatou replaces Blatter as FIFA president, then Farrah Addo would be favourite to become president of the African confederation.

But after all that has happened, you can't pretend everything at FIFA is rosy?
I don't deny there are a number of issues that will need to be resolved. It's no secret there are political problems within the FIFA administration and the structure. But then, FIFA has changed since the days of Havelange. You could not now have a world body run by a man whose home is in Brazil. FIFA has to be run from FIFA House – whoever is doing the job.

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Keir Radnedge
COMMENTARY

Going through the motions...Juventus' Edgar Davids bursts between Arsenal's Lee Dixon and Freddie Ljungberg

Dead end doubts

UEFA must act to keep Champions League games alive

UEFA is sticking with the present Champions League format for another three seasons. But that should not stop the European confederation altering one crucial aspect of the competition regulations.

It is time – and long overdue – that goal difference was upgraded to the first solution when teams are level on points. The present system of mutual results creates too many dead matches and anomalies – at a time when concern is rising over sliding attendances both in the stadiums and in front of television sets.

Also, while UEFA is so keen to demand "transparency" from FIFA, it is high time "transparency" became the watchword within its own, highest-profile competition.

UEFA justified trying the mutual results system – traditionally used, of course, in Spain – as a form of maintaining a link with the old home-and-away direct elimination system. Well, it has been tried and it has been a failure. The evolution of football regulations decrees that goal difference is the clearest and fairest system.

Look at the recent Champions League second phase Group D. On the last day, Deportivo were home to Bayer Leverkusen, with Juventus at home to Arsenal. Juventus had four points, all the others had seven. However, though Juventus could have pulled level with the rest on points, that would not have mattered because Deportivo and Leverkusen had mutual results advantage.

Thus the Juventus-Arsenal match was dead for Juventus, while Deportivo knew that they were already qualified – which would not have been the case under a goal difference system. Deportivo were thus free to field a weakened team against Leverkusen, who duly took advantage to win in Spain and top the group.

If, on the other hand, goal difference had applied, then Juventus would still have been a threat, Deportivo would have had to play their 'real' team, Leverkusen might not have won…and Arsenal would have qualified had they won in Turin.

All the fans would have understood the issues. Isn't that worth something?

'It is time – and long overdue – that goal difference was upgraded to the first solution when teams are level on points'

Don't bet against Blatter

ONLY a brave man would bet against Sepp Blatter clinging on to the presidency of FIFA when Congress casts its votes in Seoul on the eve of the World Cup finals.

Africa's Issa Hayatou has put his head above the parapet and, egged on by UEFA, will stand on an "honesty and transparency" platform (it is interesting, incidentally, that the European body could not produce a credible candidate of its own).

Hayatou is all in favour of maintaining the Goal and assistance projects to the less well-off federations and appears committed largely to maintaining existing structures. Whether that includes expanding the executive committee is another matter.

None of this is to deny UEFA's right to be concerned about the running of the world governing body. After all, Europe provides around 90 per cent of the world game's finance – directly or indirectly, one way or another – and it is legally accountable to its own members.

The most fascinating issue concerns Germany in all of this. DFB president Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder has been forthright in confirming his country's ongoing loyalty to Blatter, under whom FIFA awarded the Germans hosting rights to the 2006 World Cup finals.

Franz Beckenbauer, a DFB vice-president under Mayer-Vorfelder, has also appeared in Blatter's corner, particularly in relation to the vexed affair of ISL's collapse.

"ISL's bankruptcy was not the fault of Blatter but the fault of ISL," says Beckenbauer.

One factor is certain: whoever wins in Seoul needs to review the entire strategy and operation of FIFA vis-a-vis marketing and TV rights.

FIFA was trapped in an outdated concept – that of selling the rights to a third party; first ISL, then, by default, to the almost equally embattled Kirch group.

UEFA's chief executive Gerd Aigner got it right by maintaining ownership of the rights and using a third party – TEAM in the Champions League context – as a 'mere' salesman. Obviously, selling the World Cup is more complex than selling the Champions League, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating – and UEFA looks far healthier than FIFA.

Here's a mischievous thought: How would Gerd Aigner fancy moving from Nyon to Zurich?

Image rights and wrongs

Yellow peril...Romania players are up in arms over rights issues

RACING driver Eddie Irvine collected a huge bill for costs as the price for winning a High Court victory over TalkSport. The precedent is important: no company has the right to use a sportsman's image in advertising or promotion without his permission.

That could have fascinating repercussions for TV channels promoting their football programmes – including World Cup coverage – and other sports entertainment sectors. A group of Romanian players, led by Gheorghe Hagi, are awaiting resolution of an action brought in Belgium in which they claim the use of their names and images within computer games infringes their legal rights.

Dan Harrington, an image rights lawyer, welcoming the Irvine decision, set out the issues by saying: "The sports marketing and player representation business has been awaiting clarity on these issues for a long time. If the Belgian case is settled in favour of the players, then the sports, advertising, media and interactive games businesses will have no choice but to confront the thorny issues raised by control of image rights.

"Also, of course, this judgment will do no harm to footballers and other athletes seeking to sell their image rights to sponsors, licensees and their employers."

Manchester United were already there. Latest reports suggest that some £20,000 of David Beckham's new £80,000-a-week contract will be an image rights settlement.

Turin cloud hanging over Delle Alpi

THE sad fact that Juventus v Arsenal drew only 8,000 fans to the Stadio Delle Alpi said plenty about the status of the match as far as Italian fans were concerned. But that was not the only reason for the low turnout. The elliptical Delle Alpi is one of Europe's most fan-unfriendly stadiums as far as following the action is concerned. It's time Turin council and the clubs got their act together, razed the whole thing and started again.

Voting with their feet...fans are conspicuous by their absence at Delle Alpi

Contract killers

SAM GOLDWYN, the Hollywood producer, said once that a verbal contract wasn't worth the paper it was written on. Football contracts appear of similar value.

Nicolas Anelka was just one of the most high-profile examples of a contract breaker when, effectively, he forced Arsenal to sell him to Real Madrid three years ago. Madrid's good fortune was that, once they rumbled his character, they found a club in PSG with more money than sense to pay them a comparable fee.

ITV Digital was thus not undertaking a course of action totally foreign to the football industry when it decided it had no option but to crash its Football League coverage contract with £180million still outstanding. The timing – March 27, 2002 – may thus go down in football history (British football, at least) as the date the bubble burst.

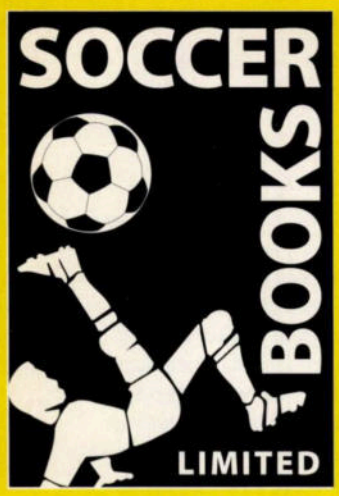
It's a complex issue. ITV Digital hoped Football League coverage would bring it the profile and revenue that had accrued to Sky from the Premiership. But whereas Sky had access to everyone who bought a dish, ITV Digital could not even get its signal out. Then there was wrangling over access to Sky's digital platform. One way or another, ITV Digital's negotiators emerged as losers both re the FL deal and Sky 'distribution'.

So the business didn't come in, so ITV Digital could not support the FL contract. Similarly, if a club are relegated within the FL they cannot afford the same salary levels and players have to be released and/or sold off. Contract or no contract.

Austria look to Swiss for joint success

IT DIDN'T work with Hungary last time out, so Austria have switched to Switzerland as a partner in their bid to win hosting rights to the 2008 European Championship finals. They look the early front-runners in competition with six other bids: Croatia/Bosnia, Hungary, Greece/Turkey, Nordic (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, with support from Faroes and Iceland), Russia and Scotland/Republic of Ireland.

Considering the issues bedevilling Portugal's hosting of 2004, the likelihood is UEFA's opinion will veer towards a bid that promises political and financial stability. Just think: a plus for Scotland and Ireland might be the fact that by 2008 they could be sharing the same currency.



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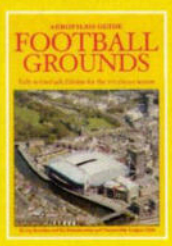

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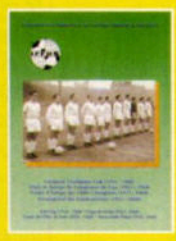

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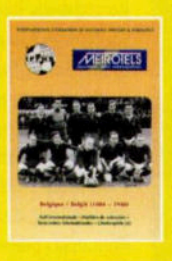

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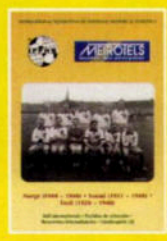

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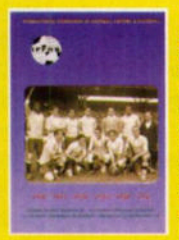

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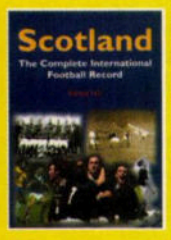

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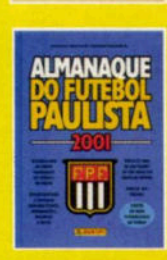

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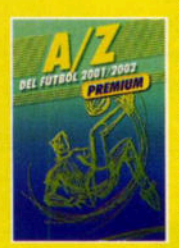

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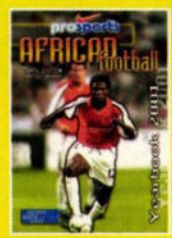

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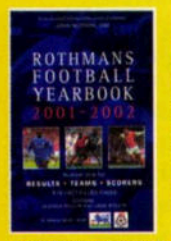

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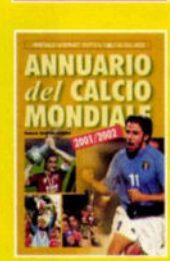

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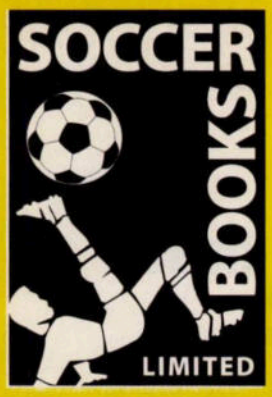

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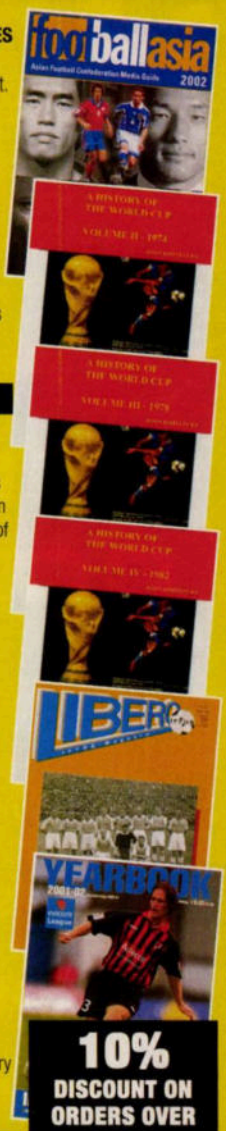

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2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA JAPAN

THE COACHES

In our 21-page special, we turn the spotlight on the men whose decisions over the coming weeks could make the difference between success and failure for their respective countries in Korea and Japan. Who would be a World Cup coach? Get it right and they will be hailed as heroes. But get it wrong, as many will, and they will never be forgiven.

ARGENTINA Marcelo Bielsa

'The stronger our rivals, the better'

What do you think of the draw?
I'm happy we will have matches that are worth playing. One dreams all one's life of playing in the World Cup, and when it happens, it is better to do it against great teams. We play better against strong teams rather than weaker ones, who go out to defend more.

Why are you happy that Argentina are in such a strong group?
No team can be champions without demonstrating that they are better than the rest. If Argentina are considered favourites, I think it is a good idea that they have to demonstrate it right from the start. Everybody who follows soccer, professional players – some good and others bad (as in my case) – amateurs and fans celebrate a match against a team such as England in a World Cup as something of a classic, and it is a joy to play in it. The more spectators in the stadium, the better; the stronger the rival, the better; the more there is to play for, the better. I enjoy that.

Why did you not go to Busan for the draw?
I didn't see the point because I had no function there. One cannot participate, intervene, help or anything. The only difference would have been that instead of seeing it on TV in my home, I would have seen it live. But why travel halfway around the world and back for that?

What do you think of Argentina's group rivals?
Nigeria are a team with great players, but perhaps they depend too much on a player being able to dribble past three rivals to create danger. With England, their individual play is also more important. They have players like Owen, Beckham and Gerrard who give the game brilliance and elaboration. Sweden are a very direct team, less patient in their build-up, and with speed and surprise in attack.

How good are Argentina?
Our players have reached a high standard, which comes from playing regularly in strong leagues, and they are close to their top level. But we have to play better in the World Cup, otherwise there is no guarantee of success. A distinction of our team is that they still possess an amateur spirit, even though they are highly-paid

Relishing a tough group...Bielsa

professionals – it is the same spirit that drew us to the game as kids.

Who are your key players?
I have never underestimated Juan Veron's importance to the team, but I also know that there are players who can replace him without deteriorating the collective function of the team, perhaps in different ways.

Why don't you play leading goalscorers Gabriel Batistuta and Hernan Crespo together?
I haven't ruled it out, but it is difficult to find a satisfactory end to the controversy. This team plays with three men up and a midfielder breaking just behind them so there is no room for two penalty-area players. The whole system would have to be changed. Why change a successful system?

Will you stay on as national team coach after the World Cup?
This does not depend on me exclusively. There is also the kind of offer the Argentinian FA make me, and our results. How can I talk about the future if it is all tied up with results, especially in Argentina? I know the rules of my profession and adapt. But in any case, I haven't made up my mind yet.

Who will win the World Cup?
If it is not to be Argentina then I cannot look beyond France. They are recognised as the No 1 team in the world and that is justified by their results.

Would you rather go down in history as a 2002 World Cup winner or for your team's excellent play?
In a country where the most important thing is the result, I have to follow the norm. If I feel the same way, that does not matter. However, I believe there is no better way to gain success than by choosing to play good football.

Interview: Eric Weil

BELGIUM Robert Waseige

'I don't feel any pressure'

What are your chances at the World Cup?
Let's get the first round out of the way and then we'll talk about them. Obviously, our first game, against Japan, is very important if we want to reach the next stage.

Who will win the World Cup?
Argentina are the obvious favourites but you cannot rule out either France or Brazil.

Who will be the surprises?
I think that Japan are going to be the main surprise, which may not be good news for us. No one in Europe knows much about them, but at least we have seen them on video.

Which player will be the star?
Francesco Totti is the player I most like watching. He is very strong, has enormous talent and I'd like to think he will be the star of the tournament, followed perhaps by Zidane and Raul.

Will the conditions affect you?
We'll be there on May 23, which will give us plenty of time to acclimatise to the Japanese weather. There should be no problem.

Can Belgium regain the form they showed in the play-offs against the Czech Republic?
Of course we can. Since our qualification we have been unable to play our strongest team in the games against Norway and Greece. The pitch was very bad on the night of the Norway game and we could not play at our normal level. The injury that has kept out Emile Mpenza hasn't helped. Also, I have rested certain players and experimented in defence in an effort to find the perfect partnership.

Can you find room for both Johan Walem and Marc Wilmots in your team?
It all depends on whether I need Wilmots for the attack and that, in turn, depends on Mpenza's fitness. Wilmots is very versatile, and if everyone is fit, I think that he would be the preferred choice in midfield. Unless Wilmots plays just behind the front two, there is not room for both players in midfield.

What is your ideal attacking partnership?
It could be Emile Mpenza and Wesley Sonck, but Mpenza's ankle injury means that we still have not had the opportunity of trying them together.

Keeping cool...Waseige

Would you ever be prepared to change from your preferred 4-4-2 formation?
No. I have always said that 4-4-2 is my strategy, and so far it has been relatively successful. I don't like to adapt for the sake of the opposition.

Do you feel the pressure knowing that Belgium's disappointing showing at France 98 effectively ended Georges Leekens' time as coach?
I don't feel any pressure because my contract takes me up only until the end of the finals. The Belgian FA president, Jan Peters, has said that he wants to extend my contract until Euro 2004. If everything works out well for us in Japan, then maybe I'll stay on longer.

Interview: Nicholas Harling

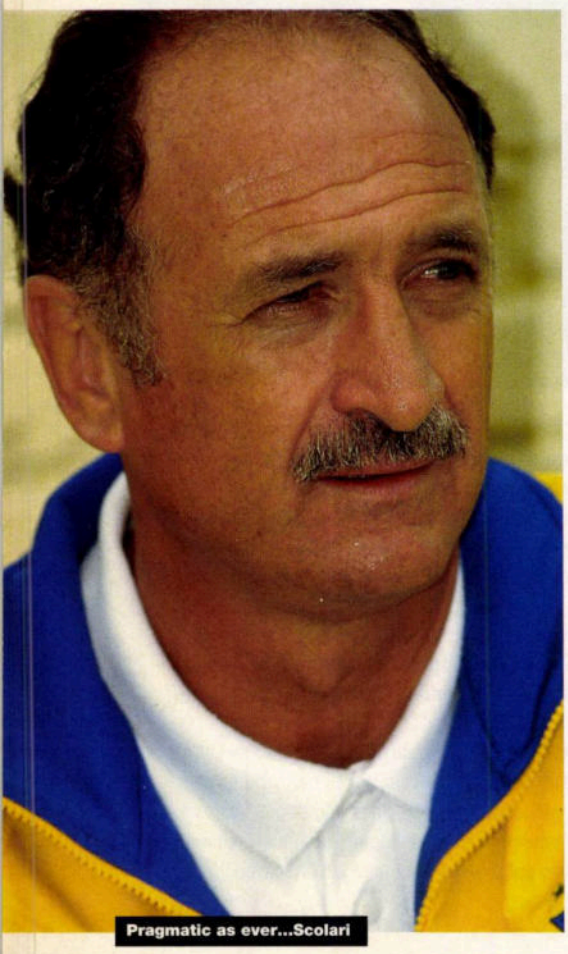
2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA JAPAN

BRAZIL Luiz Felipe Scolari

'If we have to play ugly, we will play ugly'

What do you think of the draw?
The Brazilian media have written it off as very easy, but we don't see it that way. We have respect for the teams we are going to face. We know that in football today – and there are examples everywhere – nobody wins before the game has started and nobody wins on the basis of the names in the team. They win if they produce the goods on the field. Turkey have improved in the past seven or eight years, and their clubs have been very successful in Europe. They are very fast, physically strong and their movement is good. Costa Rica play similar football to Brazil, they have a good touch, close passing and good technique. Nobody gets a free place at the World Cup.

Who are your key players?
The most important thing is to have a unified group. The national team should be like a family. Everybody has to get on with everybody else and be prepared to save everyone else's skin. As an example, I once played in a marvellous team, Caxias. Our group was spectacular, we played an excellent championship, then they brought in three very good players. But one took the place of a player we liked a lot. The central defender who played alongside me told me: "I'm not going to cover for him. I don't like him. He goes up to join the attack and doesn't come back; I'm not doing his work for him." We lost the next game 5-1. It is handy for a football team to have a leader and today, for example, we have Emerson, who is a person everyone listens to and who is an example off the field, so we try to give him more responsibilities.


Pragmatic as ever...Scolari

Who will win the World Cup?
France and Argentina are ahead of the rest, but I have a lot of belief in Brazil. I have absolute confidence that we will get to the last four, and the supporters can demand explanations if we don't.

Who will be the surprises?
Uruguay will show their traditional determination, which overcomes a lot of other weaknesses. Ecuador will be a surprise; they have good players who have speed and will prove that Ecuador are no longer the poor relations. But Portugal are the most likely to spring a surprise. This is their best team since 1966, and from what I saw in the qualifiers, they will go far.

Will the conditions affect you?
We will travel to South Korea in stages, stopping in Spain to play a friendly against a Catalan XI and then in Malaysia for a few days to adapt to the time difference. It's important to limit the use of cellular phones by the players. When it's midday in Brazil, it's midnight in South Korea, and we don't want players being woken up in the middle of the night and then being dead on their feet at training.

South American players have long had a reputation for gamesmanship, but nowadays European players are probably worse and seem to be better at getting away with it. Do you find this a problem?
Everybody does it, but the media talk much more about the South Americans. European referees clamp down more on South American players than they do on European players. When it happens in Europe, the opponent reacts with disgust as if it were something out of this world, as if it were unethical. Here, the South American player sees it as a merit, as cunning, they like to think they pulled a fast one on the opponent and the referee. But when we play outside South America we pay the price.

The Brazilians do not just want their team to win. They want Brazil to play with gusto. Is it possible to do both?
You play with joy when you get the right result. How can you play with joy if you lose? Imagine if we go to the World Cup and play three wonderful games, all out of this world – and we don't qualify. What's the point in that? We have to ally the two things but always looking for the objective. If we have to play ugly to reach the objective, we will play ugly. What's the point of a Cup? To be champions.

Were you affected by the heavy criticism early on in your tenure, especially after the defeats by Honduras and Bolivia?
I felt the pressure and difficulties in adapting because I have always been a club coach and when I got to the national team it was different. You have to know a few things, it takes three months to get to know the players. Then the snowball starts and there are always people that like one player or the other, there are always interests here and there. I have sons aged 17 and 10, and, of course, at school, there's always a joke here, a joke there, more comments in the street, etc. At one point, it got to them a bit – the mickey-taking on television – they were upset and they asked me if it was worth it. In time, and as I began getting the taste for the *selecao*, I told them it was. Now, I'm extremely happy to be in charge of the national team.

Carlos Alberto Parreira won the World Cup with Brazil in 1994 but was vilified constantly by the critics and even jeered by Brazilian fans at the Final. How do you explain that?
It amazes me. Parreira should be revered because he demonstrated the meaning of having belief in your work. Everybody was against him but he said he would reach his objective and he did. He also made the players believe it, and that was to his great credit. In 1982, we had a spectacular team but, at the moment when we could have sat back and administered a situation [needing a draw against Italy], we kept attacking and playing pretty football. For that reason, 1982 didn't go down in history as Brazil's Cup. Who went down in history? Parreira in '94.

Have the problems involving the Brazilian federation (CBF) and its president, Ricardo Teixeira, affected you and the team?
The CBF has given me the conditions I needed. The president has always told me we will go to the Cup together. If he gives me his word, why will I doubt it?

Interview: Brian Homewood

Living a fairytale...Schafer

CAMEROON Winfried Schafer

'This squad can live with the pressure'

What do you think of the draw?
It will be a very interesting, exciting fight with three equal teams. Everybody knows the qualities of the German team. Ireland are dangerous – they put Holland out and didn't lose a game in their qualifying group. Saudi Arabia are the only outsiders.

Who are your key players?
Goalkeeper Boukar Alioum, who had a very good Nations Cup; the defensive line with our captain Rigobert Song; Marc-Vivien Foe, our central midfielder; Lauren, who has improved a lot; and Patrick Mboma, who will make progress with his games for Sunderland.

Who will be the surprises?
I hope it will be Cameroon. We are capable. Pele said an African country will win the World Cup. Perhaps we could be the first. But Japan could also be a big surprise. They play at home and the crowd will be enthusiastic. Players? Who knows? Perhaps my player, Foe. I hope so, because he was injured in 1998 in France in the last training session before the first match. Foe is similar to Patrick Vieira.

Will the conditions affect you?
Since the Nations Cup we are used to living as a group. There is a lot of discipline in the team, a very good mentality. We will be in Japan in due time and prepare in Oita.

Who will win the World Cup?
Argentina, France or Portugal. Perhaps Italy, if everything goes well for them.

How do you get on with the Cameroon federation?
Fine. After the Nations Cup, the president, Mohammed Iya, team manager Andre Nguidjol and myself visited European clubs to thank them, because our players returned late to their teams. They had to stay for some days in Yaounde to celebrate the title.

In what language do you speak to the players?
English, mostly. If there is a problem, my assistant, Joseph-Marius Omug, translates my German into French.

Are you happy with Cameroon's status as Africa's leading nation?
At the Nations Cup there was a big pressure in being favourites and title-holders. Everyone expected we would win the title again. This squad proved they can live with the pressure. We have progressed a lot in FIFA's rankings.

How will you feel when Cameroon play Germany?
I will enjoy it. As a coach a World Cup tournament gives you a special chance to prove something. In Germany I was without a job for a number of months. Now I go to Japan – it's like a miracle.

Will you stay with Cameroon after the World Cup?
I've a contract until the end of the tournament. Afterwards, the federation can extend my contract. I would like to stay because it's brought me a lot of joy. I would like to help Cameroon's talented young players. And I will fight against soccer slavery, when kids are enticed to leave their country with promises of money in Europe.

Interview: Hardy Hasselbruch

CHINA Bora Milutinovic

'We're fighting for second place behind Brazil'

What do you think of the draw?
When you have Brazil in your group, it's already more difficult. When you are with a team like Brazil, France or Argentina then it leaves everyone else fighting for one place. Turkey have made huge progress and Costa Rica are the best team in Central America. They had a good Copa America and it's going to be tough for us.

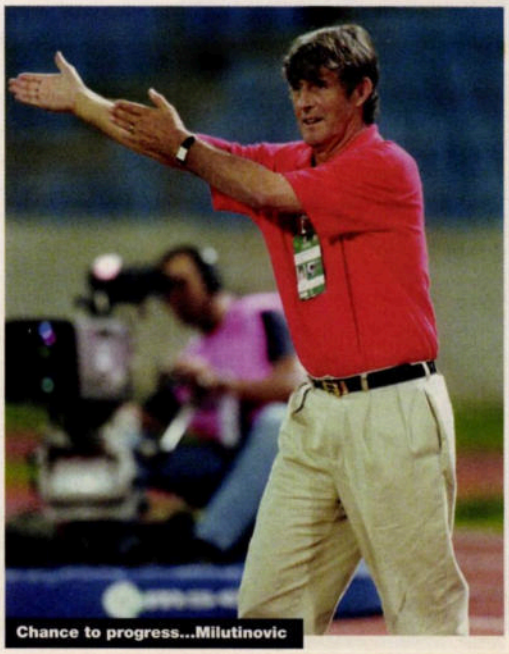
Who are your key players?
Fan Zhiyi, Li Tie, Li Weifeng and Qi Hong, who scored some important goals for us during the qualifying tournament.

Can you reach the second round?
If we play the way we played in the second phase of qualifying then we will be OK. But it still won't be easy.

Who will be the surprises?
It's hard to be a surprise these days because the same teams are always involved, although you had Croatia in 1998 and Sweden in 1994. Maybe Portugal or Cameroon can find a way to do something this time.

Will the conditions affect you?
The conditions will be the same for everyone. You never play in perfect conditions, you can always find something wrong. But I'm sure the pitches will be the best ever in a World Cup.

Interview: Michael Church


Chance to progress...Milutinovic

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA JAPAN

COSTA RICA Alexandre Guimaraes

'We're full of good feelings'

What do you think of the draw?
It's interesting because our opponents represent three different schools of soccer. Above all, the main obstacle are Brazil, and if we do well in that match, it opens a window of possibilities. Turkey are very passionate, but their fans are not so patient. China are intriguing because they are an unknown quantity. It won't be the same as in 1990, where we reached the second round without any pressure.

Who are your key players?
The spine of our team is: Erick Lonnis [goalkeeper], Gilberto Martinez [defence], Mauricio Solis, Rolando Fonseca [midfield], Paulo Wanchope and Ronald Gomez [forwards].

How will the conditions affect you?
Going to the Orient with plenty of time to acclimatise will make a big difference. We will arrive three weeks before the start of the tournament. I don't think the rain or humidity will make a difference. In Costa Rica there are parts of the country which are humid. We will get used to the setting beforehand.

Who will win the World Cup?
France, Argentina, Brazil or Portugal.

Who will be the surprises?
I think Portugal will confirm what they have already shown. They have a generation of players who are of a very high level. I don't like to talk about individual players, but I would like one of the Ticos [Costa Rica] to be the player who surprises the critics.

Describe Costa Rican football
The Costa Rican player is extremely noble, disciplined and dedicated – that's very important for a trainer. He is also very technically gifted. Every town has a church and a football field – that is how things are in Costa Rica.

What are your expectations of the World Cup?
We're full of good feelings. It will be our second World Cup, and we hope to enjoy it to the maximum. The World Cup is a party, and for us, a country that has such difficulty reaching the finals, we have to live it, enjoy it and take advantage of it.

Who is the best player in the world?
I don't feel right now there is one player indisputably better than the rest, as there was in other times. There are several that can confirm their status as a superstar: Raul, Figo, Owen, Zidane, Rivaldo, Veron. But these days, the stars need the team around them.

When you took the job, did you imagine it leading to this?
I knew we had possibilities. I knew we had a very good group of players who wanted to show Costa Rica had talent. But the way we qualified, first in the CONCACAF region, as top scorers and with the best defence, it would be naive to think we would have imagined that. But you have to set high goals.

Are people wrong to talk about Wanchope all the time?
They're not wrong because every team always have a player who is a symbol. In this case, Paulo is a symbol for Costa Rica. In the previous generation, Hernan Medford was the symbolic player. And Paulo has proven himself in a very competitive league in England. But I'm sure Costa Rica will show other interesting and talented players.

Interview: Keyvan Antonio Heydari

Balanced approach...Jozic

CROATIA Mirko Jozic

'The lesson from 1998 is that Croatia can succeed'

What do you think of the draw?
It could have been better, but it could also have been much worse. Italy are one of the favourites, not only in our group but also for the tournament. I also believe we have certain advantages over the two American teams, but we certainly won't underestimate them. Mexico have twice been in the Final of the Copa America, and Ecuador have made great progress in recent years.

Who are your key players?
Everyone knows I expect a lot from Alen Boksic, especially because he missed the World Cup in France through injury; so he is extremely motivated. I also expect Bayern's Robert Kovac and Igor Tudor from Juventus to do well. I hope Tudor will confirm that he is one of the world's best defenders.

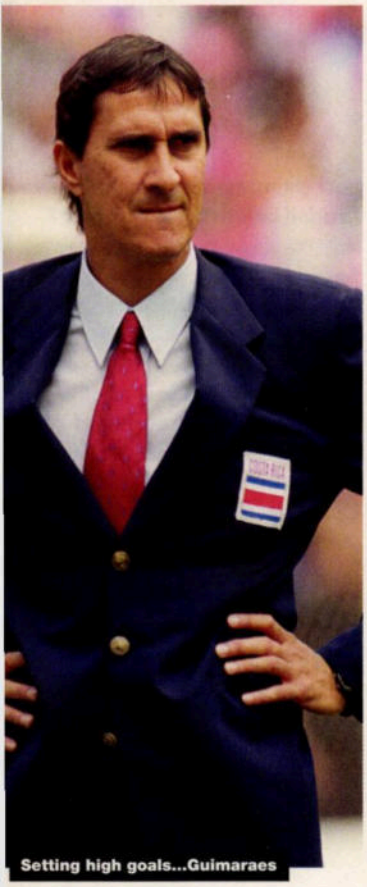
Who will win the World Cup?
France, Argentina, Italy or Brazil.

Who will be the surprises?
The hosts, Korea and Japan, who would not stand a chance of reaching the second round in other circumstances. Also, all the South American teams should be watched. As for players, the Italians Totti or Vieri, England's Owen and Spain's Raul have already confirmed that they are world class.

Will the conditions affect you?
High temperatures won't create as many problems as the high humidity. European players, other than those from Mediterranean climates, will feel it most acutely. We might have a problem with three matches in 10 days. The important thing will be how to make transfers from the training camp to the stadiums, because the traffic conditions are difficult.

Is third place in 1998 a burden on the present team?
No, it should motivate everybody. In 1998 the team peaked at the right time, but don't forget that two years later they failed to qualify for Euro 2000. So for this new team, the lesson from 1998 is that Croatia can succeed.

Are you concerned that a number of Croat players can't get into their club sides?
It's a worry, but I have said that players who are on the bench won't be among the 23, regardless of reputation. The exceptions will be players with a bright future, such as Bosko Balaban.


Setting high goals...Guimaraes

What about Robert Prosinecki?
Prosinecki is a very important team member but he needs to sharpen up, even though he has made progress since joining Portsmouth. I don't want the issue to dominate our selection.

What progress have you made since taking over in February 2001?
We have achieved a balance between young players and the veterans.

Are young players coming through?
Croatia is an inexhaustible source of young players, but too many go abroad and too few make progress there, while the others mainly stagnate. We are lucky – we reached this World Cup because we invested heavily in working with young players.

Interview: Zdravko Reic

DENMARK Morten Olsen

'We don't have a Laudrup any more'

What do you think of the draw?
It is a tough group, no doubt about that. France are the world champions, Senegal reached the Final of the African Nations Cup, and as for Uruguay, who would underestimate them? There are no easy opponents any more in World Cups. You must expect very hard matches.

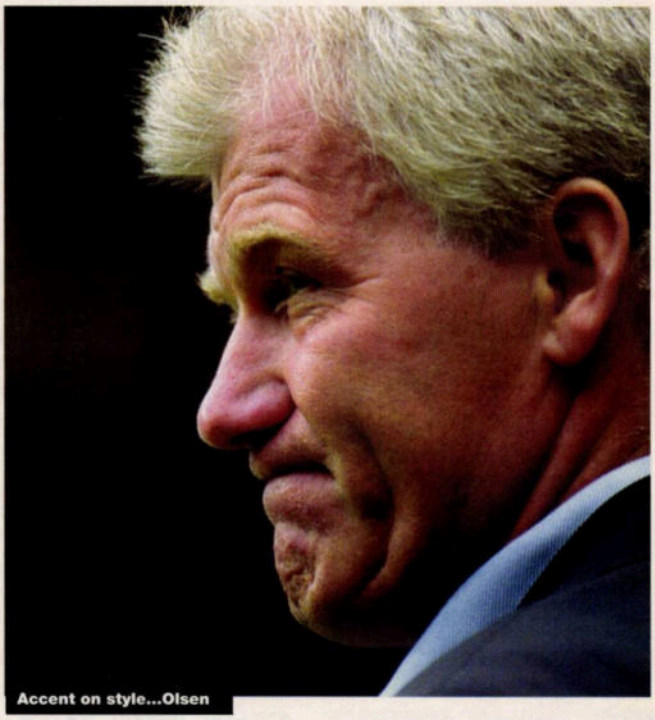
Who are your key players?
I don't think we have a star. The team is the star. We have some good players and they complement each other. We have a good balance of experience and youth. I cannot and will not pick out one player. We don't have a Laudrup any more.

Who will win the World Cup?
France and Argentina are the teams to beat.

Who will be the surprises?
That is very difficult. There are three, four, five very good teams, and of the rest, many can beat each other. There will be a surprise, I'm sure of it. Maybe it can be us. Nowadays, the difference is so small between most national teams that many of the countries could make a run in the tournament.

Will the conditions affect you?
It's a professional world and all teams make good preparations. Some nations will have players in the Champions League Final in May and that could be a little problem. The humidity might be a factor for the Europeans, but I don't think so because we know how to prepare. Players may be tired from a long season so it could be that a player who missed half the season with injury and is physically very fresh could be the star of the tournament.

Which player will be the star of the World Cup?
Football nowadays is more about the collective. That has grown more important over the past 20 years. But there are always key players, such as Zidane, Figo and Owen. Some Argentinian and Brazilian players may make an impact but I don't think a new name will emerge.


Accent on style...Olsen

What are your chances?
Our strength is that we know what we are capable of, and that we have a philosophy of playing with style. I think that's important because there's only one winner in every game, and if you try to win in a negative way that's bad for football.

How important is it to have players from the Danish Superliga in the squad?
There are some, and it is good for Danish football. For 30 years, whenever a player from our League has made the national team he has immediately transferred abroad. It will be the same with the new crop like Peter Madsen and Christian Poulsen. But it's a vital ingredient to have some domestic players in the squad. It is a great incentive to everyone to see the team is not exclusively for players abroad.

Is there a chance Peter Schmeichel will come back for the World Cup?
No. Peter has had a fantastic career and is still playing very well for Aston Villa. He still has the ability to play at a World Cup, but he has retired from the national side and we have a marvellous new young keeper in Thomas Sorensen.

What does the future hold for you after the World Cup?
I have signed for another five years with Denmark and I feel good about the job. We have good young players coming up, and can look forward with optimism to the 2004 European Championship and the 2006 World Cup.

Interview: Jim Holden

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA JAPAN

ECUADOR Hernan Dario Gomez

'We're a bit like Colombia'

What do you think about the draw?
At least we don't have to dance with the ugliest. We're not in the group of death. But we have a rousing challenge against powerful rivals. It's going to be very difficult, but I'm happy to take on genuine world powers. Italy and Croatia are among the favourites, and Mexico have been to so many World Cups. So in terms of history we're fourth in the group, but we have faith.

Could your team be overawed by playing in their first World Cup?
They have learnt to cope with pressure and responsibility. I was struck by how calm they were when we needed a point against Uruguay.

How far can Ecuador go in this World Cup?
It's important that the public are aware that Ecuador are going to the World Cup to learn. It's a lesson I learnt with Colombia in 1994 [he was assistant coach], when the team went to the World Cup with a head full of dreams. They were soon back home facing all the criticisms after being knocked out in the first round.

Who are your key players?
Agustin Delgado for his goalscoring, Alex Aguinaga for his talent, Ulises De la Cruz carrying out a vital double role, Ivan Hurtado's leadership. We're a bit like Colombia – we may not have the strength in depth of Brazil or Argentina, but there is a lot of talent.

You have put a lot of importance on team spirit.
It's excellent that they all get on so well. We have a solid group who, bit by bit, have become a family. By nature Ecuadoreans are loyal and honest, and these characteristics come through in our team. We made a point of educating the players to help them realise the importance of their profession. We had to first unite ourselves in order to then unite the country.

Where do you need to improve?
We're still inconsistent. We lack maturity at times, though we're making progress.

Ecuador are playing a lot of preparation games. Is there much value in these friendlies?
The games are good for making the team more mature. All these journeys, the time stuck in hotels and the sacrifices can be tiring, but it's helping us grow as an international team.

How important was Ecuador's first full international in Europe?
I told the players that the game against Turkey was the opening game of the World Cup. And the 1-0 win was the most important triumph of my career.

You were shot last year after getting mixed up in a political row. But it doesn't seem to have made you bitter.
Ecuador has given me a great deal. I'm very happy here, and I believe that I've become not only a better coach, but also a better person. I wasn't sure about it when I arrived. I found the country divided and full of problems, and I wanted to go back to Colombia. But I stayed, and I ended up getting to know a people who are honest and full of solidarity.

Interview: Tim Vickery

Never a dull moment...Eriksson

ENGLAND Sven Goran Eriksson

'I feel a little bit English'

There is a lot of interest in you. Do you not feel more pressure to talk to the press, or does the FA control who you speak to?
No, there's an agreement between the FA and myself. The difference between this job and being a club manager is very big. This is a huge job and there are a lot of supporters; a club can never have as many. So if you hold press conferences and give interviews all the time, then you end up doing it every day, more or less. I'm not prepared to do that, I don't think it's fair and I don't think that England fans want to see my name in the papers every day.

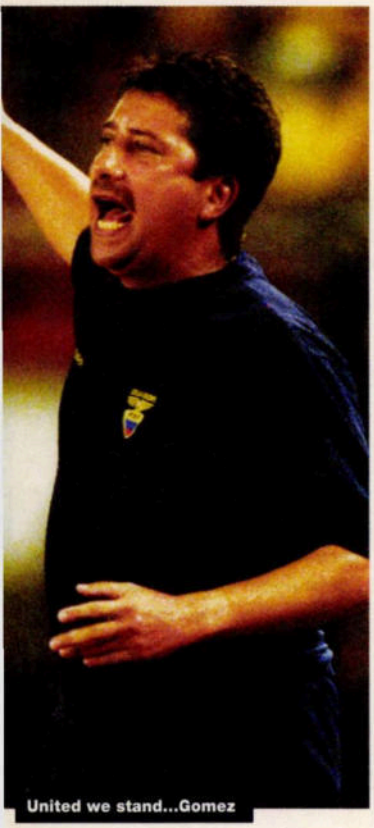
You must have a lot of spare time. How do you spend it?
When I took this job, I thought there would be a lot of spare time, that I would have time to travel in private. But that was a big mistake. There's more to do as a national team manager than as a club manager, even though you don't have daily contact with the players. Sometimes there are as many as six games a week to see. So I spend a lot of time travelling.

Have you been surprised at how quickly people have taken to you, because a lot of people were suspicious of you to start with?
I can understand why people were suspicious because I am a foreigner. I'm a little surprised at how quickly people changed, but that's football. If you get results, you are popular. If you lose, it goes away very quickly.

Can England win the World Cup?
That would be great, but let's not talk about winning the World Cup. I think it could happen, of course. But for me the big favourites are Argentina and France, maybe Italy.

Will there be any surprises?
The surprise teams could be Japan and Korea because they will be playing at home. One of the African teams always does very well – let's hope it's not Nigeria this time!

How will the conditions affect you?
They will affect all of us. Maybe the northern European teams will be affected more. But it's going to be like the United States in 1994 – very humid and very hot. You have to try to prepare for that by drinking a lot of water and sports drinks because you are going to lose a lot of weight during the games. We will have to get out there early to try to get used to it as much as possible.


United we stand...Gomez

How English do you feel now?
I'm a Swede, of course, and I always will be. But I'm starting very slowly to accept the traffic in London, and the rain – so I feel a little bit English.

Can you sum up your coaching philosophy?
That's difficult, but I'll try: be very compact when you defend, be very quick when you attack. Always remember that the goal is out front not at the side. Whoever you are in the team, whether you're the manager, a player, the kit man, respect is very important, respect for everybody else in the team, the referee, the opponents.

Interview: Gavin Hamilton

● *Sven Goran Eriksson's World Cup Manager and World Cup Challenge computer games are published by 3DO Europe (Playstation) and Ubi Soft (PC)*

FRANCE Roger Lemerre

'We still have the same burning desire to win'

What do you think of the draw?
The opening match is always difficult to negotiate, and it makes no difference whether it's against a champion or a beginner. Senegal have a good team, and as their coach, Bruno Metsu, is French, we will not be a secret to him. Uruguay and Denmark demand respect as well.

Who are your key players?
I prefer to regard the team as a unit, with the players who made us world and European champions continuing to strive for excellence and keeping their great competitive mentality, while the younger players try to emulate the achievements of their elders.

Who will win the World Cup?
Important nations like Brazil, Argentina, Italy and England should be in contention, as we will. Our players still have the same burning desire to be at the top and we are determined to defend our title. I'm reassured that we still have the spirit and the willingness to put in the extra effort required, and the modesty.

On top of the world...Lemerre

Who will be the surprises?
Hard to say. In my opinion, no team that has got this far can be underestimated. Perhaps the hosts, South Korea and Japan, will surprise. Home advantage can lift them to another level.

Will the conditions affect you?
As professionals we have a duty to adapt. We are prepared. We played in South Korea in the Confederations Cup last year and won.

Do you think the fact that you have played only friendlies for two years is a disadvantage?
Of course, on a psychological level the pressure in friendlies is not the same as for competitive matches. But it's not true to say that friendlies are without importance. Opponents always want to defeat the world champions, and so that makes for good tests.

Is Lilian Thuram better at right-back or in central defence?
The needs of the team mean he plays at centre-back for his club, Juventus, and right-back for France. He's very effective at full-back, the best in the world in that position.

You gave central defender Philippe Christanval his debut against Romania recently. What's your opinion of him?
He's done well in all the young French sides and was with us before Euro 2000 before being injured. The fact he's a first-choice for Barcelona is no irrelevance.

Nicolas Anelka and Youri Djorkaeff have had their problems at club level this season. What are their chances of making your squad?
Nicolas has just moved to a new club, Liverpool, and obviously he knows English football well. He has to play regularly, but he's on the right road. Youri has to bounce back at Bolton after his difficult time with Kaiserslautern. I know he has a great ambition to be present in South Korea and Japan.

What's it like to be the coach of the number one national team in the world?
I benefit from every day I spend with the French squad. It's real happiness.

Interview: Nick Bidwell

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA JAPAN

GERMANY Rudi Voller

'Anything is possible in a knockout system'

What do you think of the draw?
The Republic of Ireland will be tough. You have to remember they came through a very hard qualifying group ahead of Holland. Cameroon proved their worth by winning the African Nations Cup, and we can't underestimate Saudi Arabia either. They are our first opponents of the tournament, and it's vital we start well. All told, I'd call it a satisfactory draw.

Who are your key players?
Oliver Kahn has an important part to play. He's the best keeper in the world and has a lot of influence. Players listen to him and follow the example he sets.

Who will win the World Cup?
The favourites are Argentina, France, Brazil and Italy.

Who will be the surprise teams?
Nigeria and Cameroon may be revelations. Cameroon's individual quality, in particular, is superb.

Will the conditions affect you?
Of course. The heat and humidity are factors we'll have to adjust to.

What are your aims in the finals?
The initial aim is to get through the opening round, and, once there, you go from game to game. Anything is possible in a knockout system. On our way to winning at Italia 90, we beat Holland in the second round, but we could have lost that game.

Most of your squad is built on players from Bayern Munich and Bayer Leverkusen. Is it harder for players from other clubs to force their way in?
No. The deciding factor in my choice is individual performances.

Have Germany emerged stronger from having to go through the play-offs?
Yes. We all came closer together and improved because of the great pressure on us in the play-offs. I'm looking to us maintaining the form we showed against Ukraine.

Have you settled on your squad?
I have 17 or 18 names. But there's still room for players to make a late challenge for places.

Are you worried by Sebastian Deisler's long absence with a knee injury?
I'm convinced he will get back to his best form. There's no time limit for him to prove his fitness.

Interview: Nick Bidwell

Toughest challenge...Trapattoni

ITALY Giovanni Trapattoni

'My Italy are very competitive'

What do you think of the draw?
I'm cautiously satisfied with our draw. Remember, we might have got in a group with sides like England, Portugal and Denmark. The first game will be the riskiest for us because, inevitably, all the pressure will be on us. Remember, too, that Ecuador are bound to be fired up with the enthusiasm of being World Cup debutants. Croatia have always been awkward customers for Italy. There are plenty of Croat players who have played in Italy, like Boksic, Stanic, Jarni, Vugrinec, who know us well and they'll want to do well against us. Mexico are a side with lots of experience. I would hope that by the time we play them, the match has not become decisive for us getting into the second round.

Who are your key players?
Obviously, Totti has developed and grown a lot since Euro 2000, where he already showed himself to be pretty useful. But players like Inzaghi and Del Piero were useful for us. Del Piero, after all, scored the winning goal from a free-kick in our final qualifier, against Hungary. I haven't got a crystal ball but Vieri has shown this year that he is playing well. But, in the end, it is our defence that, as always, is the most important and solid part of this Italy.

Who will win the World Cup?
France, England, Brazil, Argentina, Italy – I think that the winner is to be found in this group. They are the strongest teams, best prepared, with the best players, the sides of tradition.

Who will be the surprises?
I don't see any surprises on the horizon but I am curious, however, to see how the local sides get on, Japan and South Korea, or even China. They could all do well given the enthusiasm they will generate. I also believe that the Africans, who after all are used to hot and heavy climates, could certainly have an advantage in Korea and Japan. I think that at least one of the African finalists will rise far above the form shown in the African Nations Cup in Mali.

Will the conditions affect you?
I hope not. We've studied the climate closely. The problem is not so much the second or the third game; no, it is when you go to play the fourth or fifth match that energy becomes a problem. Sides that can use their technique to save energy will be at an advantage. The better your technique, the more energy you save, and that counts over the arc of seven games.

Will the failure of Italian clubs in the Champions League this season prove to be an advantage or a disadvantage?
There's no doubt that the elimination of Juventus and Roma gives the international players a chance to rest and recoup energy that they would otherwise have used up in Champions League games. Maybe it will give them an extra motivation, too, when it comes to the World Cup.

Are you worried Italian football may be in serious decline?
I'm not worried. When it comes to the

Handling the pressure...Voller

crunch, our football has always come through. My Italy are a very competitive side.

Is this the toughest job you have done in your long and successful career?
Yes, because when you are working with a club you can plan things, mould the team together; but here you have a month to do it and, for me, as for the coach of England, Brazil or France, all that matters is winning. And that's the biggest difficulty, because only one team wins the World Cup in the end.

What if you don't win the tournament?
It's not in my nature to start thinking about the future, about what I'll do next. I've always thought of the future as a great opportunity. If you're frightened, you'll never know it; if you're weak, you'll never get there. But if you have hope, it will be another great chance for you.

Interview: Paddy Agnew

JAPAN Philippe Troussier

'We have a one per cent chance of reaching the Final'

What are your main concerns?
My biggest concern is the back three; Morioka is missing, Matsuda is injured.

Shinji Ono is getting great experience at Feyenoord, but the other overseas players are not playing so much. Would you prefer them to be in Japan?
I am not so concerned about Inamoto and Kawaguchi; I have worked with them extensively since I took the Japan post, and they know my philosophy. [Hidetoshi] Nakata is different, because he was already in Europe when I came here. I don't know him. He comes back just one day before each match. I think Nakata has trained with me, in four years, maybe a maximum of 20 days, and Inamoto maybe 300 days. Nakata has had some problems understanding what I want, and at the moment he isn't playing in Italy. I hope, when he comes back with us, he will make a big effort to accept the way my team is organised.

What do you think about the draw?
We are not scared by it. Of course, Japan have the least experience, but technically we are not frightened of Belgium, Russia or Tunisia. Each team have a chance of getting through. We have several advantages. We are at home, and everybody believes in us, that we can get to the quarter-finals.

How would you describe the progress of the past three years?
Winning the 2000 Asian Cup was the key. After that, we played France, Brazil, Cameroon, Paraguay, Italy, Yugoslavia, and from that the players got a lot of experience. You can feel the progress if you play against these teams. If you play against Korea and you win 5-0, everybody is impressed, but it is not enough. Now, tactically, my team can challenge any team in the world, and no one in my team will be scared.

What would you term as success at the World Cup?
Everybody is excited and supportive at the moment. I think 20 per cent of the population think we will win the World Cup, and 80 per cent believe we will get to the quarter-finals. We have to sustain this dream because the World Cup will be a festival. If you ask the 32 coaches, do you think you can win the World Cup? – they cannot say yes. But somewhere in their mind they think they can. Of course, we are maybe 30 years behind, or 50 years. But who would have believed in 1958 that Sweden would get to the Final? I think we have a one per cent chance of getting to the Final. So, I would like to keep this dream.

Do you think the enthusiasm will continue after the World Cup?
I am not sure that football will become more popular. I think the real interest now is about 60 per cent, because the World Cup is coming, but the normal level, I think, is 20 per cent, culturally.

Would you like to manage a club team or a national team after the World Cup?
I like my job as national coach, but now I would like to increase my experience at a higher level. I was in contact with Scotland, though now they have chosen Berti Vogts. If that is not possible, I will maybe study some offers from clubs.

Who will win the World Cup?
Japan!

Who will be the surprise teams and players?
We don't need the World Cup to discover players. It is no surprise to find that Beckham and Zidane are good players. The best surprise will not come from some player, but from some teams, I hope Japan, maybe China, Senegal, Costa Rica. I am sure a team like Sweden will be strong.

Tactical sense...Troussier

Who are your key players?
You know your key players when they are missing. When everybody is there, you have no key players. Then the key is the team, and the team work. A lot of players could be the key ones. I couldn't give you a name, but I have a lot of key players in my head.

Interview: Mike Plastow

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA JAPAN

MEXICO Javier Aguirre

'My big question mark is our attack'

What do you think of the draw?
In the World Cup you can win or lose against anybody. We have a good chance of beating Croatia and Ecuador, and we could even win against Italy. In 1994 nobody gave us a chance, and yet we played against them as equals, finishing first in our group. My target is to try to reach the semi-finals. To do it we need the right winning attitude. I have tried to select players with that attitude.

Who will win the World Cup?
England have one of the best teams ever and the influence of Eriksson will make a difference with players who are highly competitive and without peer, mentally and physically. France must be favourites to reach the Final. They are a compact team, very disciplined and consistent winners. And, of course, Argentina, who instead of having a typical Argentinian coach now have a tactical disciplinarian. Ninety per cent of their players are now used to the hard work and discipline of playing in Europe.

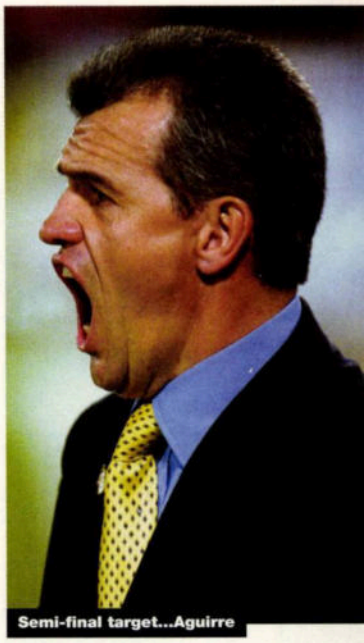
Will there be any tactical innovations at this tournament?
I see no major changes as compared to France. The globalisation of soccer has meant that the style of play in the major leagues of the world is now practised by most of the national teams. Even the Asians and Africans have European coaches.

What would you suggest to the referees?
They have to be very flexible in the interpretation of the rules. I don't know if it is feasible but perhaps FIFA would consider the possibility of assigning referees of certain regions of the world to matches of teams from the same region. This is especially important in the first round, where a suspension can affect the whole strategy of a team.

Are you worried about security?
Not really. But maybe certain countries – the USA, for instance – should be more concerned than others.

Are you happy with your build-up for the tournament?
At first I was worried that I would only have six weeks, but now that I know most European teams will have only one month I consider myself lucky.

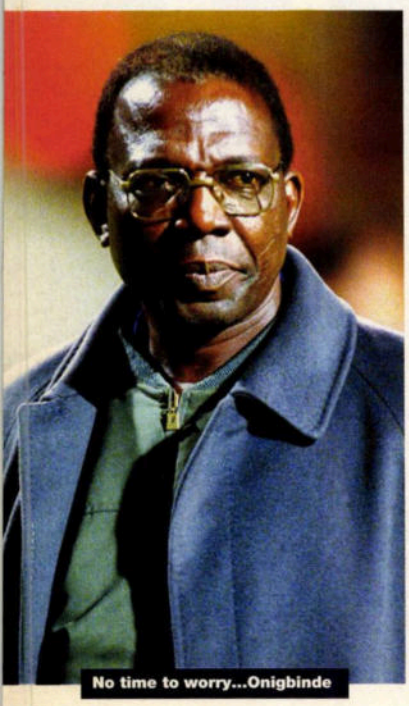
Is it true that you will not be practising penalties?
Some sections of the media have criticised my players for having missed in shoot-outs in the past. But I believe that no matter how much we practise, it is impossible to recreate the pressure and environment of a real match in a training session. The media have forgotten that anybody can miss penalties. Look at Italy; they lost important shoot-outs at the last three World Cups.


Semi-final target...Aguirre

Are you worried some key players might be missing?
One of my real concerns is whether Garcia Aspe will be able to cope with the demands of a World Cup. Another is that Blanco is not playing regularly with Valladolid. He is impatient and sometimes makes rash decisions. But Palencia is having a great season with Espanyol. The absence [both injured] of Arellano and Johan Rodriguez may force a reshuffle in midfield around Garcia Aspe. Jesus Mendoza, Ramon Morales and two recent additions – Rafael Garcia and Gabriel Caballero – are all excellent youngsters. Besides, Jose Antonio Noriega could be a good replacement for Garcia Aspe if needed. I have no problems in defence with Marquez and Suarez, supported by the versatile Mercado and the dependable Vidrio. My big question mark is attack.

You created quite a sensation by calling up Gabriel Caballero.
Just media sensationalism really. He was born in Argentina but has been playing for years in Mexico and he is now a Mexican citizen. This is not the first time Mexico has fielded naturalised foreign players: in the 1930s we had the Peruvian Lores and the Spaniard Lopez Herranz. Caballero has been outstanding with Pachuca, and I am confident both he and the younger players will shine at the World Cup.

Interview: Carlos Ramirez


No time to worry...Onigbinde

NIGERIA Festus Onigbinde

'We are in an emergency situation'

What do you think of the draw?
You couldn't get a much tougher group than Argentina, England and Sweden, but we can qualify if we take each game at a time. We have a lot of ideas on how we can beat our rivals.

Who are your key players?
I don't think it is fair to start mentioning names because that just builds up pressure on the players and, at the moment, I am still far from making my final selection.

Who will be the surprises?
I really am not concerned about the other teams for now. Time is running short for us and we are in an emergency situation trying to get ready for the World Cup finals.

Will the conditions affect you?
I travelled to Tokyo for the World Cup workshop and it was very cold. But it will be different in June, and I don't think it will matter much. We are used to the heat and, in any case, have so many Nigerian players all over the world that they have learnt to adapt well.

Who will win the World Cup?
Nigeria, I hope.

Interview: Mark Gleeson

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2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA JAPAN

PARAGUAY Cesare Maldini

'I'm ready for my fourth World Cup'

Your appointment caused a great deal of controversy in Paraguay. What attributes do you bring to the job?
I come from a school in which the result is the most important thing. Italian football receives some fierce criticism, they call us the catenaccio kings. But our approach took us to victory in the 1982 World Cup, where our strengths were a solid defence with two stoppers and a sweeper, and a rapid counter-attack.

Paraguay played most of the qualifiers with a back four. Will you introduce a sweeper system?
There is so little time available to work before the World Cup that it is not feasible to start playing around with systems. Besides, Paraguay did well in qualification – a competition in which even Brazil had problems – so I don't feel inclined to make a change.

Can you get to know all the players in such a short time?
It is not easy. I think only Paraguay have players all over Europe, all over South America and in Mexico, and the fixture lists of all these tournaments all over the world don't coincide.

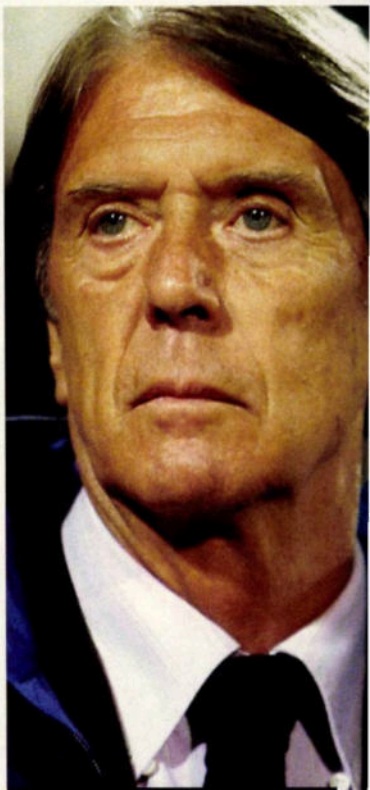
Who are your key players?
The defensive unit, with keeper Chilavert plus a back four of Arce, Ayala, Gamarra and Caniza. And Roque Santa Cruz is fundamental to us. But the strength will be the team. It has character and force of personality.

How are you coping with criticism from the press?
It is the same all over the world. The difference is that now with Paraguay I give press conferences to 15 journalists. When I was coach of Italy it was 80.

Were you surprised to be offered the job?
I was honoured to be asked. I've always had a feeling for South America and Paraguay, and that is my main motivation for this adventure. It's a big challenge, and there is no time to lose. I'm ready for my fourth World Cup.

The Paraguayan coaches association claims you signed your contract while you were in the country on a tourist visa and therefore legally unable to work.
It's not correct, there's no worry. I'm calm because I'm assured that there is no legal problem.

Interview: Tim Vickery


Walking into controversy...Maldini

Relying on unity...Engel

POLAND Jerzy Engel

'This side still have a lot to learn'

What do you think of the draw?
Group D is very difficult for us. Polish fans really don't know American and Korean football, so they think they are not so good. Of course, that's wrong. On paper, Portugal seem to be favourites to win the group. But the favourites sometimes disappoint.

Who are your key players?
Jerzy Dudek has never let me down. I can rely on him, especially in very tense situations.

Who will win the World Cup?
France and Argentina have the greatest potential.

Who will be the surprises?
Japan have made huge progress. They can give their fans a surprise, especially as co-hosts. I believe in my team, too! Portugal will be dangerous. It is their last chance to win something with the group of players they have.

Will the conditions affect you?
The heat may be a problem. During a meeting in Japan, the 32 coaches made proposals for an extra break in each half to let players take in liquid. We also wanted the option of substituting three players and the goalkeeper in each game, and two more in extra time. This seemed logical, but I doubt the suggestions will be accepted.

Before the home qualifier against Norway you showed the players a film of World War Two. Why?
Sometimes you need to be a bit different. The game against Norway was played on September 1, a momentous date in Poland: on that day in 1939 the Second World War started on Polish soil. I wanted the players to associate September 1 with a great victory for Poland. I wanted them to do something for the whole nation.

You always ask your players what their favourite position is. Why?
Each player should go out to play safe in the knowledge that he is the right person in the right place.

You said that Poland could reach the last four. Do you believe it?
Yes, we can, but every player needs to be fit, in peak form and well prepared. A few are in dispute with their club coaches and others have injuries. So at the moment, my aim looks ambitious.

Are you worried about your lack of tournament experience?
No. This side still have a lot to learn, but their strength is their unity.

Interview: Dariusz Kurowski

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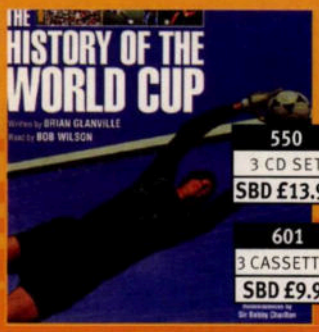

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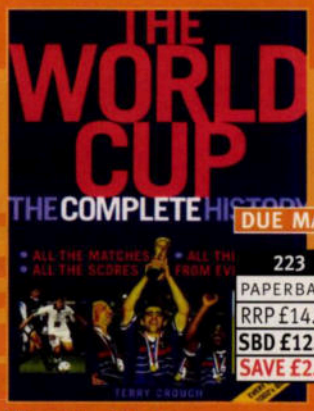

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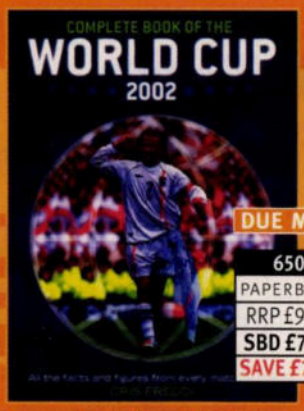

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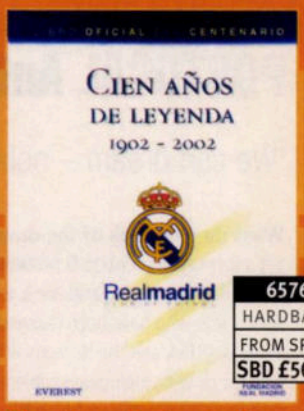

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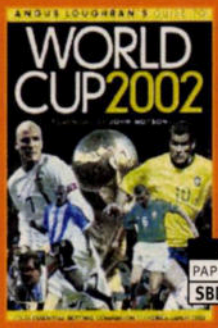

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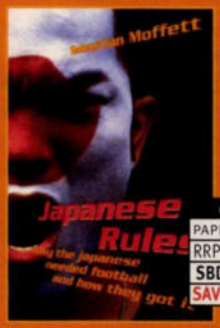

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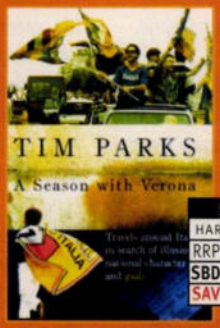

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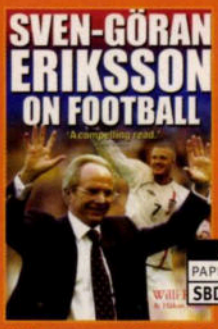

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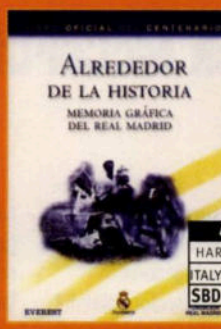

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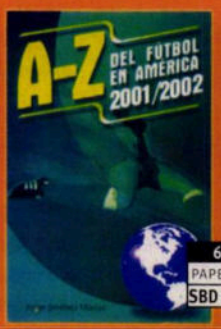

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2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA JAPAN

PORTUGAL Antonio Oliveira

'We can dream – nobody can take that away from us'

What do you think of the draw?
Let's just say that Group D presents us with a fair chance. Poland are a very strong side who have been rejuvenated, while the USA and the Koreans will present us with their own problems. We won't be playing until June 5, which I like, and I am also happy that all our games will be played in South Korea.

Who are your key players?
Luis Figo is exceptional. He is what Eusebio was, decades before. But I also love the way Rui Costa plays. Special attention must be given to the central defenders, Jorge Costa and Fernando Couto. Another player who will catch the attention is Nuno Gomes. Then we could mention the likes of Joao Pinto, Sergio Conceicao, Abel Xavier…

Who will be the surprises?
They could be South Korea, who have great speed and have shown good organisation. Their world ranking doesn't matter because they will be playing at home.

Will the conditions affect you?
We will use experts to prepare for all unusual or adverse conditions. No one will ever win the World Cup if they have not adapted to the conditions. If all our players are OK physically and psychologically, we can beat anyone.

Who will win the World Cup?
All my thoughts are centred on June 5, 10 and 14, our Group D games. People keep saying that Portugal are among the favourites. We can dream – nobody can take that away from us – but the history of Portuguese football tells us to be careful. One of the most advanced football nations may win – Argentina, Brazil, Spain, Germany, England, Italy and, perhaps, us.

What's happening with Jorge Costa?
I was very concerned when he was not playing for FC Porto. But he has been playing regularly at Charlton and his form has improved. Many of our players play in foreign countries. They acquire experience, and the value of that experience from France, Italy, Spain and England is enormous for us.

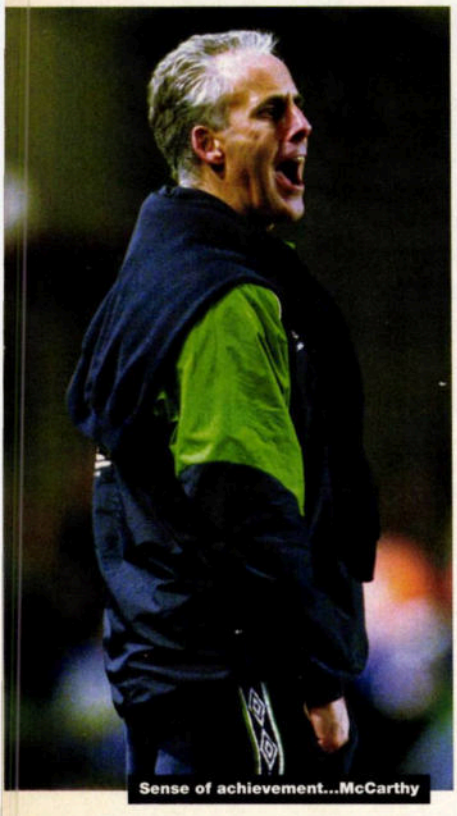
Will you be coach for Euro 2004?
My commitment with the Portuguese FA is on paper – up to Euro 2004. But I have told the football authorities that a number of important measures must be implemented. We do need a training centre for the national team.

Did you always believe that you would qualify for this World Cup?
We were the best team in the group, but the pressure was unbelievable. After the game against Estonia in Tallinn, I discovered I had lost more than 3kg without having done any exercise!

Are you happy that the players who were suspended following the Euro 2000 semi-final defeat are available?
Nuno Gomes, Abel Xavier and Paulo Bento are now back from suspension and they have all been part of recent squads. Nobody can say that they have been ignored or not given a chance.

Will you play with one or two strikers?
Of course, I would like to play with two strikers or even more. But the Portuguese team is not structured for such schemes. Because with people like Figo, Rui Costa, Joao Pinto and Sergio Conceicao playing in midfield, there simply is no vacancy for a second striker.

Interview: Alberto da Silva


Sense of achievement...McCarthy

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND Mick McCarthy

'I don't pick the squad on personalities'

What do you think of the draw?
It doesn't really matter who you get, you have to play them, but we are happy enough. Germany are obviously not as strong as they used to be, we have seen a fair bit of Saudi Arabia because we nearly met in the play-offs. My assistant Ian Evans checked out Cameroon at the African Nations Cup. We won't be caught by surprise.

Who are your key players?
We are a team and I wouldn't like to single out any individual players. I am not being smart, but we will see who the key players are when the competition gets under way.

Who will win the World Cup?
I'll go for France to keep the Cup for another four years.

Who will be the surprises?
Senegal could be one of the surprises. Playerwise, I like the Nigeria-born Olisadebe, who now plays for Poland. I gave him my third vote in the recent FIFA coaches poll.

Will the conditions affect you?
I hope not. We are going out early enough – we leave Dublin on May 17 and will spend some time on the island of Saipan getting acclimatised. By the first game we should be tuned in with the local time. I don't think the weather will be anything like the team had to endure in the USA in 1994. In fact, it may be into the rainy season.

You captained the Republic in 1990. Are you more excited now going to the finals as a manager?
I am more excited this time around. I've gone close a few times, so now you could say I have got my reward at long last. As a manager there's definitely more of a sense of achievement.

Are you worried that referees may not be consistent?
I'm not worried in general. But our game against Cameroon on June 1 is the first game in Japan. There will be a ceremony before the game, and I'm a bit worried that the referee may try to show his authority for the dignitaries present.

Will an Eircom League player ever make your team?
I've called up two local strikers, Glen Crowe of Bohemians and Stephen Geoghegan of Shelbourne. I don't pick

Commitment...Oliveira

the squad on personalities; if they are good enough they will get a chance.

Do you mind always being compared with Jack Charlton?
No, it doesn't bother me at all. Jack was a great manager for the Republic, and as a player I was part of that success. I hope I can emulate Jack and get the Republic to the European Championship finals as well.

Did you ever think that all this success would come your way?
If I am honest, no. When I made my debut in May 1984, the Republic were going through a bad spell and we had only around 8,000 at the game. Now we are getting full houses at Lansdowne Road for friendlies.

Interview: Sean Creedon

RUSSIA Oleg Romantsev

'Anybody can beat anybody at this tournament'

What do you think of the draw?
It is no better and no worse than any other draw. Our group is as strong as any other, especially since we will be playing Japan, a host team. However, I consider our first game, against Tunisia, the most important.

Who are your key players?
We have a number of experienced players who made our qualification possible. Yet, if you want to hear names, I would single out Celta's Alexander Mostovoi, a European-class midfielder, a truly universal player who is equally good in defence or in attack. He is also one of the top free-kick experts in Europe.

Who will be the surprises?
The level of all the participants is very even. Anybody can beat anybody at this tournament, with the exception of Argentina, who, as far as I can judge, stand a bit higher than the rest.

Will the conditions affect you?
We will fly to Japan 12 days before our first game, which will give us enough time to acclimatise. We are bringing our own cook, Russian food and our own drinking water. The training base we have chosen in Shimizu is the best available. It is comfortable and secure. So I do not think the conditions will be a problem. A lot more will depend on the players' morale and fitness.

Who will win the World Cup?
I have already mentioned Argentina. France are also very strong but they are not impossible to beat.

What outcome for Russia will suit you?
Qualifying for the next stage – as our minimum aim. And then we will try not to leave the tournament for as long as possible. We cannot plan up to the Final. We have to go step by step, trying to win every game.

You will play all your first stage games in Japan and not in Korea. Does it make any difference?
After Moscow Spartak's visit to Korea we have a good following there. Otherwise, it does not make much difference. I would have liked to avoid a host team, of course, because playing the locals is always very hard.

You were one of the few coaches who missed the finals draw in Busan. Why?
There was no need for me to go there. Everybody has his own job. Our team managers flew to Busan. When we knew the results of the draw, they went to Japan for a week and took care of all the necessary arrangements there. They did a good job. For example, we have

Realistic...Romantsev

booked a very nice training camp ahead of most of the other teams.

How would you place your team in the hierarchy of the qualifiers?
The class of our players is not as high as that of the world's top teams. Our chances depend on team play and our ability to raise squad morale to the highest level before the start of the tournament.

What are your preferences when you choose between foreign and home-based players, between old-timers and young newcomers?
Their current form is the only criterion. I understand very well that for some of the old guard it is the last big international chance. I value their many years' contribution, but I will not be blinded by my personal feelings. And another important criterion: to be selected, a player must be playing regularly for his club. Unfortunately, this is not the case with our top keeper, Ruslan Nigmatullin, who is sidelined in Verona.

Interview: Victor Gusev

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA JAPAN

SAUDI ARABIA Nasser Al-Johar

'There are no secrets in football'

What do you think of the draw?
It's a very strong group because there is Germany, who have a wealth of experience in World Cup finals, as well as Cameroon, who I watched give a wonderful performance against Argentina in their recent friendly. Also, Ireland are a hard team to beat, but we will try to surprise them.

Who are your key players?
I don't depend on particular names. We play as a team.

Who will be the surprises?
Cameroon have a group of wonderful players who play in big leagues in Europe, and that has given them much-needed experience. Winning the African Nations Cup again will have helped them, too.

Will the conditions affect you?
We are well prepared. Our training camp in Italy proved a good chance to get used to different conditions.

Who will win the World Cup?
Argentina, France or Brazil.

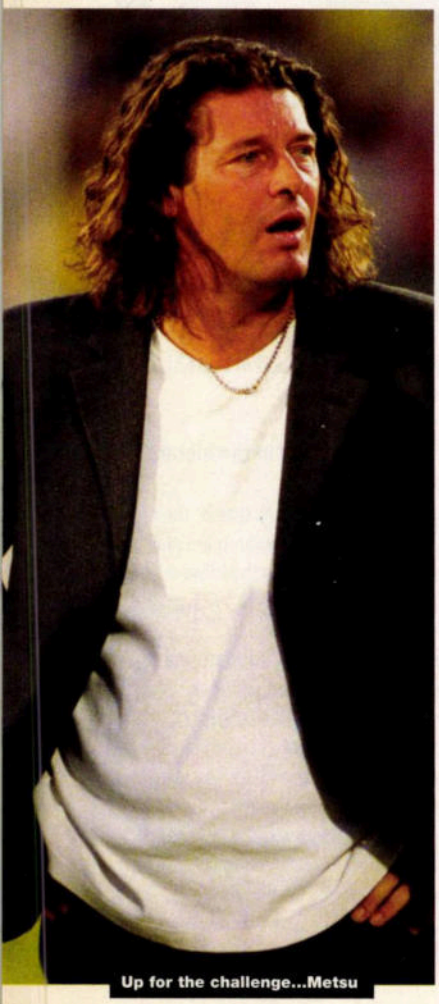
How have you assessed your group opponents?
There are no secrets in football. I know our opponents have been watching us and, similarly, my assistants have been watching them closely.

What do you expect to achieve at this World Cup?
We would like to repeat the good showing of our previous finals appearances. In 1994, we made it to the second stage. In 1998 we were in a very strong group including France, the eventual champions. I hope the players stay fit and perform in a way that portrays our football in its best light.

You are the first Saudi national to lead the team at the World Cup. Is that important?
No. The coach can provide motivation and tactics, but ultimately the players are responsible for the success of a team. The strong unity in our team is our biggest asset. It makes us capable of achieving something, despite the fact that we are playing in a very strong group.

Arab teams have done well against Germany at World Cups – Algeria in 1982, Tunisia in 1978, and Morocco in 1970 and 1986. Can you follow in their footsteps?
That is history. What we hope to achieve will only come because we are well prepared and have worked hard. I have studied the style of the other teams of my group very carefully. That, I hope, will help me to achieve good results.

Interview: Ali Saeed


Up for the challenge...Metsu

SENEGAL Bruno Metsu

'We can prove everyone wrong'

What do you think of the draw?
It's going to be extremely difficult. France are the World Cup favourites, which is hard enough, but we play them in the opening match, which adds additional pressure. Denmark are a solid team who always do well in big competitions. They got to the quarter-finals four years ago, and as we saw against Nigeria then, they seem to do well against African teams. As for Uruguay, we know how good someone like Recoba is. I think it is one of the most difficult – if not the most difficult – of all the groups. We have a young team and we are going to the World Cup to learn, so it will be both a challenge and an enriching experience.

Who are your key players?
El Hadji Diouf has always been able to provide an extra dimension for us. But now since the Nations Cup, we have shown that we have got a lot of good players, in pretty much every position.

Who will be the surprises?
I simply cannot say. It is one of those things that you will only ever be able to know once the tournament kicks off and everyone starts playing.

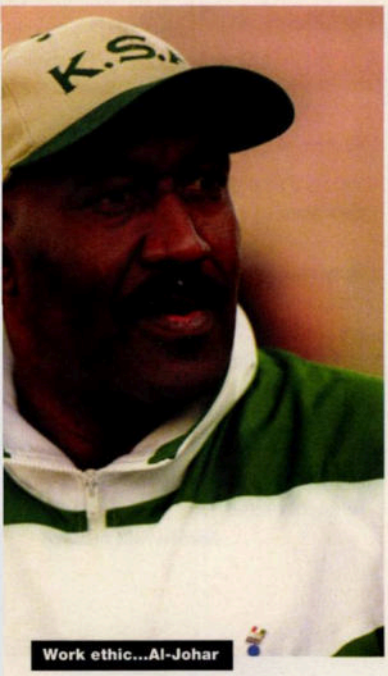
Will the conditions affect you?
Difficult to say. We might have an advantage, in that African players are used to playing under a hot sun. Most of our players play in Europe, so they are used to making long trips and coping with frequent changes.

Who will win the World Cup?
France. I am not saying that because I am French, but because they have the best team, made up of the best players. They are really exceptional and don't seem to have any weaknesses.

You play France in that first game and almost all of your squad plays in France. It's going to be a bit strange, isn't it?
That's modern football for you. Because of the strong links between France and Senegal, people are saying we are like a French reserve team. But we have quality players who are good enough to get into the full French squad. Now, for this opening game, we are going to have to face not only a great team, but also the world will be focused on us. How we react to all that is going to be very important.

You have said that you hope Senegal can become the Jamaica of this World Cup. But Jamaica lost every game at France 98.
Exactly! I was misquoted. I said I didn't want us to be like Jamaica. With all due respect to Jamaica, I don't want us to be the charming team nobody takes seriously. I want us to approach things professionally.

What did you learn from the recent Nations Cup?
Only positive things. We didn't lose a game [the Lions lost the Final on penalties] and all the hard work really paid off. We had never gone to a tournament under so much pressure; for the first time everyone expected us to do well – results were required and we got them. We learnt a lot.



Work ethic...Al-Johar

Do you think Senegal can be the surprise package this summer?
We need to win a few games. We need to get out of the group. Everyone is predicting we will finish bottom, but we are convinced we can prove everyone wrong. I am lucky enough to have a group of players who work hard and who believe in their talent.

The Lions are a young and inexperienced team. Will this be a drawback or can it work to your advantage?
Young players like mine are fresher, more eager, and they give of themselves more easily. They also play without thinking of the consequences, without calculation. Now this could be a huge strength, if we are able to play freely and without fear, or it could turn into a weakness, if we are too naive. Whatever happens, the World Cup will be a positive experience for us, but my ambitions – and those of the players – stretch much further than that.

Interview: James Copnall

SLOVENIA Srecko Katanec

'I've made the players believe they can compete with anyone'

What do you think of the draw?
I'm neither disappointed nor satisfied, because we are outsiders in any case. Our chances of reaching the second round are small, whereas Spain, with 10 previous World Cup appearances, are surely favourites. Paraguay and South Africa have also appeared in past World Cups. So they have a big advantage from the start. However, we are used to breaking with tradition, and we'll be there to cause another surprise. The most important thing is to prepare well, to play brave football, give our best. Luck can decide a lot of things.

Who are your key players?
I don't have key players; I don't want to acknowledge such thoughts. We can manage without anyone, even though some people say we are too dependent on Zlatko Zahovic's mood. But the most important matches in the qualifiers were played without Zahovic, and even without some other regular players. There are no stars in my team, I do not acknowledge them.

Who will win the World Cup?
It all comes down to the usual favourites. That means France, Brazil, Italy, Argentina and Germany. They possess more than 20 players with the same qualities and won't be disturbed by injuries or suspensions. Experience is also of utmost importance in the World Cup, and the strongest teams possess it.

Who will be the surprises?
I don't believe there'll be any. Many predict that Portugal might be, but I doubt it. They're not a well-balanced team. They have six or seven great players but they have weak defenders.

Will the conditions affect you?
No. I would actually claim that the conditions could be ideal: temperatures of about 20 degrees and humidity of about 60 to 70 per cent. We will depart for the Far East 13 days before the start of the competition; that's just enough time to acclimatise.

Will you be a better team than at Euro 2000?
Euro 2000 was two years ago, and that's history for me. In football, even seven days is a long time. We cannot let ourselves rely on memories from Belgium and Holland. Besides, it should be mentioned that most of our players do not play regularly for their clubs.

Are you concerned about their lack of match practice?
Yes, a lot. There's a big difference between playing regularly and sitting on the bench. However, the most important thing is that my players arrive fit. Then I'm pretty sure we'll prepare well. I also know that everyone will be motivated, and that's also important.

How will you select your final squad?
I need 23 players, and each one of them must be able to play; that means I do not take anyone just because of his past merits. Because I expect that Slovenia won't play more than three or four matches, 23 players is more than I need. The World Cup is not for learning, but to show what you already know.

Is Zlatko Zahovic the brightest star in Slovenian football?
A lot of people see him like that, but I don't accept it. I have spoken with him and we have settled everything. That means Zahovic must do his bit for the team. A big advantage for me is that we eliminated Romania [in the play-offs] without Zahovic. I have experience. I competed [for Yugoslavia] in the 1990 World Cup and 1984 European Championship, as well as two Olympics. I know that allegiance to individual players does not result in good relationships.

Preaching self-respect...Katanec

How have the team progressed under your guidance? And will you carry on after the World Cup?
I haven't made a decision yet; I will deal with that question after the World Cup. I have done a lot to improve this team's self-respect, I've taught players how to respect themselves, and not to underestimate others. I have made them believe that they can compete with anyone, even the strongest.

Interview: Zdravko Reic

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA JAPAN

Batistuta fan...Sono

SOUTH AFRICA Jomo Sono

'The heat could work in our favour'

What do you think of the draw?
There is little you can do about it, so there is no point worrying about it. Obviously, Spain will be very tough opponents, Slovenia and Paraguay not far behind them – but when I look at some of the other groups, it could have been tougher.

Who are your key players?
Sibusiso Zuma and Shaun Bartlett, who will lead our attack, are experienced and doing well in Europe. But I would rather not single out players; we intend to succeed through our teamwork.

Who will be the surprises?
I hope the African sides produce a lot of surprises. Cameroon and Senegal must have a good chance after playing so well at the African Nations Cup finals. For a surprise player, I am a great admirer of Gabriel Batistuta of Argentina, although his form is not too great at the moment and it doesn't look as if he is going to make their team.

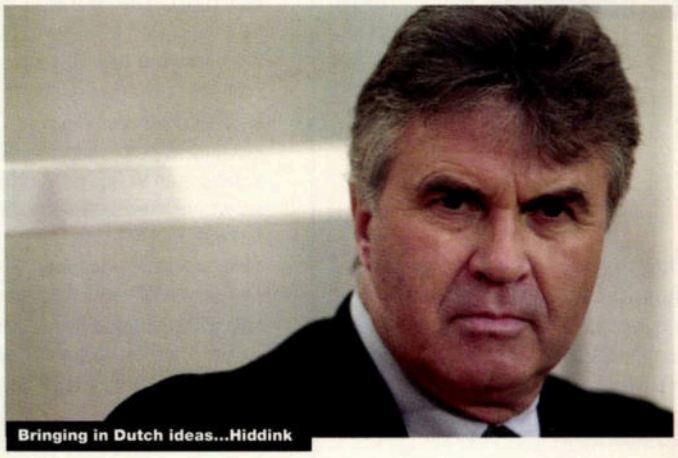
How will the conditions affect you?
We are not scared of the heat, we are used to it. This might be a factor in our favour, but I hope it won't be too humid.

Who will win the World Cup?
Argentina or France – and South Africa, of course!

Interview: Mark Gleeson

SOUTH KOREA Guus Hiddink

'I have 90 per cent of the team selected in my mind'


Bringing in Dutch ideas...Hiddink

What do you think of the draw?
It's very exciting to be in a group with opponents such as Portugal and Poland. It's a big challenge, but it's also a fantastic opportunity for us to show the world what we can do.

How do you assess your opponents?
People say Portugal are the most dangerous, but they are well known to us. Poland are a real headache because they have hardly appeared in the previous tournaments. Nor will the USA be easy. They play a version of European football.

What is your target?
I am confident that we can qualify for the second round. It is hard to measure morale, but we are working hard and we will enjoy some home advantage.

Who will win the World Cup?
England, France or Argentina.

You seem to be trying to introduce Dutch ideas to players who may not have that capability?
That's partly true, but I have done it before. After Euro 96 I made some changes to the Dutch team and made them a more attractive team to watch. It would be stubborn to do the same here, not knowing the players. But after five or six months, I felt I had the players to go down the same road that I went with the Dutch team.

The Dutch are taught from an early age to play a certain style. Is it easy for the Koreans to adapt?
One of the problems with Korean players is that they lack experience. With respect, the K-League is not one of the biggest leagues. But the players are very open to ideas and they learn very fast. In the process, they make a lot of mistakes, but it's been one of the most positive things. In the West, especially in Holland, young players can be rather stubborn. That can be a good quality, but mostly it is negative.

The less physical side of Asian soccer must be frustrating for you. In the short term, you can't make the players bigger or stronger.
That's true. It's one of my main concerns and that's why I made sure that our warm-up programme consisted of games against European or African teams. In the past, South Korea have played second- or third-rate Asian countries, got good results, and so everyone in Korea thought things were going well. Then they have fallen down at a World Cup. With strong opposition, there is always the danger of being beaten, and we have lost. But we have learnt a lot more from playing the Czechs or Nigeria.

How have your preparations been going?
I have 90 per cent of the team selected in my mind. Since January I have had them 24 hours a day. We've been playing lots of games, but there has also been a tough training programme. We are working on developing their mobility, their explosiveness.

What about access to the overseas-based players?
They are the only problem, particularly the Europe-based players, who are not playing regularly. I have talked about it with their managers, who are only thinking of bringing players in to make lots of money. But the more money they get, the less importance they place on player development.

Some coaches are worried the atmosphere at the World Cup will be artificial. Are you concerned?
The crowd always supports the Korean national team and there is always a good atmosphere. But the Europeans may find it difficult.

Interview: Gavin Hamilton

● *More coaches, pages 56-59.*

WORLDSERVICE

On top...Mario Jardel

Jardel leads the way

Sporting Lisbon striker Mario Jardel is on course to win the ESM Golden Shoe for the 2001-02 season. Jardel, who won the award in 1998 and 1999 while at FC Porto, led the standings from Arsenal's Thierry Henry with only a handful of League games remaining.

ESM EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES — GOLDEN SHOE

ESM GOLDEN SHOE STANDINGS AT 04.04.02

pos	name	team	goals	factor	pts
1	Mario Jardel	Sporting Lisbon (Por)	33	1.5	49.5
2	Thierry Henry	Arsenal (Eng)	22	2	44
3	Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink	Chelsea (Eng)	21	2	42
	Dario Hubner	Piacenza (Ita)	21	2	42
	Pauleta	Bordeaux (Fra)	21	2	42
	Wesley Sonck	Genk (Blg)	28	1.5	42
	Ruud Van Nistelrooy	Manchester Utd (Eng)	21	2	42
8	Christian Vieri	Internazionale (Ita)	20	2	40
9	Henrik Larsson	Celtic (Sco)	26	1.5	39
10	Marc Lloyd-Williams	Bangor (Wal)	38	1	38
	David Trezeguet	Juventus (Ita)	19	2	38
12	Maksim Gruznov	Trans Narva (Est)	37	1	37
13	Christian Gimenez	Lugano/Basle (Swi)	24	1.5	36
	Alan Shearer	Newcastle (Eng)	18	2	36
15	Ronald Brunmayr	Grazer AK (Aut)	23	1.5	34.5
	Pierre Van Hooijdonk	Feyenoord (Hol)	23	1.5	34.5
17	Catanha	Celta Vigo (Spa)	17	2	34
	Jean-Claude Darcheville	Lorient (Fra)	17	2	34
	Marco Di Vaio	Parma (Ita)	17	2	34
20	Ricardo Nunez	Grasshopper (Swi)	22	1.5	33
21	Djibril Cisse	Auxerre (Fra)	16	2	32
	Cristiano Doni	Atalanta (Ita)	16	2	32
	Patrick Kluivert	Barcelona (Spa)	16	2	32
	Fernando Morientes	Real Madrid (Spa)	16	2	32
25	Ilhan Mansiz	Besiktas (Tur)	21	1.5	31.5

For the latest standings, updated twice weekly, visit www.worldsoccer.com

INTERNATIONALS

Sunday, March 10

Mar 10 - Birmingham - friendly
United States 1 (Lewis 21)
Ecuador 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 24,133. **Ref:** Sibrian (ElS)
USA: Howard - Mulrooney, Llamosa, Berhalter, Agoos, Armas, Jones (West 82), Lewis, Donovan, Mathis, McBride. *Sent off: Mathis 58min.*
Ecuador: Cevallos - Mendez, Porozo, R Guerron, M Ayovi, G Espinoza, E Tenorio, Obregon, Chala (Gomez 66), Asencio, C Tenorio.

Wednesday, March 13

Mar 13 - San Diego, USA - friendly
Mexico 4 (Borgetti 23, R Morales 29, Bautista 51, 90)
Albania 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 32,109. **Ref:** Stott (USA)
Mexico: O Perez - A Rodriguez (Saavedra 58), Vidrio, Suarez (Garces 55), H Morales, R Morales (Osorno 46), Mercado, Caballero, R Garcia (Garcia Aspe 36), Borgetti (Bautista 46), Mendoza.
Albania: Nallbani - E Beqiri, Dabulla, Sheta, A Beqiri, Amati, Babamusta (Ahafa 65), Fortuzi (Manzafky 63), Jupi, Bulku, Sinami (Dembi 46). *Sent off: A Beqiri 44min.*

Mar 13 - Tunis - friendly
Tunisia 0
South Korea 0
Att: 10,000. **Ref:** Mustapha (Egy)
Tunisia: Bejaoui - Mkacher, Jaidi, Azaiez, Thabet (Marzouki), Mkademi, Badra, Hammi, Chouikha (Mouelhi), Jelassi (Ben Younes), Jaziri (Daassi).
South Korea: Kim Byung-ji - Hong Myung-bo (Lee Chung-soo), Song Chong-gug, Choi Jin-chul, Kim Tae-young, Lee Eul-young (Hyon Young-min), Kim Nam-il, Lee Young-pyo (Cha Doo-li), Choi Sung-yong, Lee Dong-gook, Hwang Sun-hong.

Thursday, March 14

Mar 14 - Florence
Saudi Arabia 0
Estonia 2 (Zelinski 11, Tirnhof 51)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 500

Saturday, March 16

Mar 16 - Belle Vue - Cosafa Castle Cup
Mauritius 2 (M Razafindrakoto og 14, Bax 78)
Madagascar 3 (Randriamarozaka 17, E Razafindrakoto 44, Randrianasoloniaina 58)
HT: 1-2

Wednesday, March 20

Mar 20 - Cartagena, Spain - friendly
Finland 0
South Korea 2 (Hwang Sun-hong 86, 89)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 500. **Ref:** Esquinas Torres (Spa)
Finland: Jaaskelainen - Reini (Ylonen 46), Kuivasto, Tihinen, Saarinen, Kuqi (Niemi 89), Valakari, Nurmela, Vayrynen (Wiss 46), Forssell, Johansson (Heikkinen 82).
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae - Hong Myung-bo, Song Chong-gug, Choi Jin-chul, Lee Eul-young, Kim Nam-il (Yoo Sang-chul 79), Lee Young-pyo, Ahn Jung-hwan (Yoon Jung-hwan 65), Cha Doo-li (Choi Sung-yong 79), Lee Chun-soo, Seol Ki-hyeon (Hwang Sun-hong 65).

Mar 20 - Pistoia, Italy - friendly
South Africa 0
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al-Temyat 60)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 100. **Ref:** Bertini (Ita)
South Africa: Baron - Jordan, Booth, Molefe, Mohlala, Nzama, Mngomeni, Sibaya, Pienaar, Vilakazi, Mukansi.
Saudi Arabia: Al-Deayea - Zubromawi, Doukhi, H Al-Dosari, Fallatah, Al-Shahrani, Nhosawy, Al-Temyat, Al-Khatran, Al-Jizani, Al-Harshan.

Thursday, March 21

Mar 21 - Osaka - friendly
Japan 1 (Toda 25)
Ukraine 0
HT: 1-0
Japan: Narazaki - Matsuda, Miyamoto, K Nakata, Ichikawa (Hato 79), Fukunishi (Myojin 61), Toda, Alex (Nakamura 46), Morishima (Ogasawara 56), Yanagisawa (Takahara 61), Nishizawa (Suzuki 46).
Ukraine: Reva - Popov (Radchenko 46), Vaschuk, Holovko, Nesmachnyi (Zadorozhnyi 63), Husin, Tymoshchuk (Zotov 85), Shyschenko, Zubov (Serebrennikov 69), Zakarlyuka (Rikoun 56), Vorobei (Melaschenko 76).

Tuesday, March 26

Mar 26 - London - friendly
Nigeria 1 (Okocha pen 82)
Paraguay 1 (Gamarra 18)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 6,285. **Ref:** Bennet (Eng)
Nigeria: Ejide - Onyeokwu (Sodje 32), Udeze (Ikedia 84), Ejiofor, Ifejiagwa, Okocha, Kanu, Ogbeche, Idakhor (Shittu 71), Babayaro, Kaku.
Paraguay: Chilavert (Tavarelli 46) - Arce, Gamarra, Ayala, Caniza, Struway, Gavilan (Quintana 84), Paredes, Bonet, Cardozo (Campos 65), Santa Cruz.

Mar 26 - Bochum - friendly
Turkey 0
South Korea 0
Att: 15,000. **Ref:** Frohlich (Ger)
Turkey: Rustu (Omer 57) - Fatih Akyel, Umit Ozat, Bulent Korkmaz (Emre Asik 80), Umit Davala (Nihat 46), Ogun (Ilhan 46), Tugay (Ergun 46), Emre Belozoglu (Hasan Sas 46), Hakan Unsal (Abdullah 61), Basturk (Izzet 61), Hakan Sukur.
South Korea: Kim Byung-ji - Choi Jin-chul, Hong Myung-bo, Kim Tae-young, Song Chong-gug, Yoo Sang-chul, Kim Nam-il, Yoon Jong-hwan (Park Ji-sung 66), Lee Young-pyo, Choi Yong-soo, Hwang Sun-hong (Lee Dong-gook 80).

Wednesday, March 27

Mar 27 - Tirana - friendly
Albania 1 (Tare 39)
Azerbaijan 0
HT: 1-0
Albania: Beqaj - Lala (Bulku 88), Dede, Xhumba, Murati, Hasi, Haxhi (Dobi 63), Bellaj (Muka 46), K Duro (Jupi 70), Rraklli, Tare (Bogdani 70).
Azerbaijan: Mahamadov - F Mamedov (Rasat 63), Yadullayev, A Mamedov, Ahmadov, R Mamedov, K Guliev, R Guliev, Imamaliev (S Aliyev 55), V Vasiliyev (F Ismailiov 46).

Mar 27 - Geneva - friendly
Argentina 2 (Veron pen 16, Aimar 62)
Cameroon 2 (Eto'o 19, Suffo 86)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 7,660. **Ref:** Leuba (Swi)
Argentina: Burgos - Chamot, Pochettino, Samuel, Zanetti (Almeyda 46), Veron, Aimar, Sorin (Placente 75), Caniggia (Solari 89), Kily Gonzalez, Claudio Lopez.
Cameroon: Alioum - Kalla, Song, Njitap, Wome, Tchato, Foe, Olembe (Ngom Kome 80), Djemba (Epalle 72), Eto'o, N'Diefi (Suffo 67).

Mar 27 - Graz - friendly
Austria 2 (Brunmayr 64, Weissenberger 78)
Slovakia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 9,100. **Ref:** Steinborn (Ger)
Austria: Manninger - Feldhofer, Baur, Stranzl (Dospel 23), Kitzbichler (Lexa 76), Aufhauser, Herzog (Weissenberger 61), Panis (Holler 76), Wallner, Vastic (Hickersberger 83), Linz (Brunmayr 57).
Slovakia: Contofalsk - Kratochvil, Karhan, Petras, Gresko, Demo (Mintal 46), Michalik (Soltis 88), Dzurik (Spilar 76), Labant, S Nemeth (Reiter 46), Bencik. *Sent off: Karhan 84min.*

Mar 27 - Belize City - friendly
Belize 3 (Celiz 27, Burgess 35, Frazer 75)
Guyana 1 (Hutson 26)
HT: 2-1

Mar 27 - Sarajevo – friendly
Bosnia-Herzegovina 4 (Bolic 3, 66, Barbarez 14, 37)
Macedonia 4 (Sakiri 53, 76, 89, Ciric pen 64)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Shupraha (Cro)
Bosnia: Piplica (Stojkic 46) - Bajramovic (Nadarevic 46), Miskovic, Konjic (Hajdurovic 46), Akrapovic (Papac 46), Hibic, Bolic (Dodik 67), Sabic, Barbarez (Blatnjak 67), Music, Biscevic.
Macedonia: Milosevski - Stavrevski, I Mitrevski, Maznov (Gjokic 46), Georgievski (Petrov 42; Zaharievski 72), Sainovski (A Mitrevski 26), Ciric (Vajs 90), Sakiri, Popov (Nacevski 68).

Mar 27 - Fortaleza - friendly
Brazil 1 (Luizao 71)
Yugoslavia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 57,000. **Ref:** Gonzalez (Par)
Brazil: Marcos - Lucio, Anderson Polga (Denilson 46), Roque Junior, Cafu, Emerson Ferreira (Kleberson 67), Gilberto Silva, Roberto Carlos (Junior 76), Ronaldinho (Juninho Paulista 80), Ronaldo (Luizao 46), Edilson (Djalminha 70).
Yugoslavia: Jevric - Mirkovic, Mihajlovic (Dzodic 75), Krstajic, Lazetic (Krivokapic 80), P Djordjevic (Boskovic 75), Jokanovic (Duljaj 64), Dmitrovic, Mijatovic (Koroman 54), Milosevic (Lazovic 85), Kezman (Sasa Ilic 80).

Mar 27 - Zagreb - friendly
Croatia 0
Slovenia 0
Att: 9,000. **Ref:** Szabo (Hun)
Croatia: Pletikosa (Butina 46) - D Simic (Stanic 46), Tokic, Simunic, Tomas, Zivkovic, Andric (Olic 57), Jarni (Hrman 67), Prosinecki (Agic 46), Boksic (Rapajic 46), Suker (Vugrinec 46).
Slovenia: Simeunovic - Milinovic, Galic, Knavs, Novak, A Ceh, Pavlin (Pavlovic 67), Karic (Gajser 79), Zahovic (Sankovic 89), Osterc (N Ceh 85), Rudonja (Acimovic 46).

Mar 27 - East Rutherford, USA - friendly
Ecuador 3 (Kaviedes 23, 81, C Tenorio 50)
Bulgaria 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 45,511
Ecuador: Cevallos - I Hurtado, Porozo, De la Cruz, R Guerron, Obregon, E Tenorio (Fernandez 76), Mendez, Chala, C Tenorio (A Aguinaga 73), Kaviedes (Ordonez 83).
Bulgaria: Zdrvakov - Neshadov (B Ivanov 71), Topuzakov, M Petrov, Berbatov, Balakov, Markov, Kirilov, Stilian Petrov, Manchev, I Petkov.

Mar 27 - Leeds - friendly
England 1 (Fowler 63)
Italy 2 (Montella 67, pen 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 36,635. **Ref:** Fandel (Ger)
England: Martyn (James 46) - Mills (P Neville 46), Southgate (King 46), Campbell (Ehiogu 46), Bridge (G Neville 86), Beckham (Murphy 46), Butt (Hargreaves 46), Lampard (J Cole 46), Sinclair (Sheringham 71), Heskey (Fowler 46), Owen (Vassell 46).
Italy: Buffon - Materazzi (Iuliano 56), Cannavaro, Nesta (Adani 82), Panucci (Coco 75), Zambrotta, Di Biagio (Gattuso 57), Doni (Tommasi 75), Zanetti (Albertini 57), Delvecchio (Maccarone 75), Totti (Montella 46).

Mar 27 - Tallinn - friendly
Estonia 2 (Oper 10, 86)
Russia 1 (Beschastnykh 18)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 6,500. **Ref:** Frojdfeldt (Swe)
Estonia: Kaalma - Allas, Stepanov, Piiroja, Saviauk, Reim, Haavistu (Saharov 80), Kristal (Leetma 84), Oper, Terehhov (Rooba 77), Zelinski (Viikmae 67).
Russia: Nigmatullin (Filimonov 46) - Kovtun (Chugainov 46), Sennikov, Karpin (Bober 46; Karyaka 72), Mostovoi (Khokhlov 46), Sychov, Onopko (Nikiforov 46), Smertin (Dayev 46), Titov, Beschastnykh (Kerzhakov 46), Izmailov.

Mar 27 - Saint-Denis - friendly
France 5 (Zidane 11, Trezeguet 22, 41, Henry 31, Marlet 86)
Scotland 0
HT: 4-0. **Att:** 80,000. **Ref:** Granat (Pol)
France: Barthez - Candela (Karembeu 58), Leboeuf (Christanval 64), Desailly (Silvestre 46), Lizarazu, Vieira (Makelele 46), Petit, Zidane (Djorkaeff 81), Wiltord (Marlet 58), Henry, Trezeguet (Carriere 74).
Scotland: Sullivan - Weir, Dailly, Caldwell, Crainey, Matteo, Cameron (Holt 46; McNamara 74), Lambert, McCann, Freedman (Gemmill 46), Crawford (Thompson 64).

Mar 27 - Tbilisi - friendly
Georgia 4 (Kobiashvili pen 12, Demetradze 38, 86, Aleksidze 82)
South Africa 1 (Buckley 69)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Shandor (Ukr)
Georgia: Gvaramadze (Chanturia 71) - Kobiashvili, Shashiashvili, Rekhviashvili, Sajaia (Abramidze 77), Burduli (Kemoklidze 46), Amisulashvili, Dzhamarauli, Ketsbaia (Daraselia 46), Demetradze, Iashvili (Aleksidze 81).
South Africa: Vonk - A Mokoena, Molefe, Carnell, Booth (Lekgetho 46), Sibaya, Fortune (Buckley 46), Manyatela, Mnguni (Mazibuko 46), T Mokoena, Nomvete. *Sent off: Manyatela 22min, Molefe 51min.*

Mar 27 - Rostock - friendly
Germany 4 (Ziege 44, Neuville 61, Bierhoff 65, Frings 68)
United States 2 (Mathis 17, 71)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 28,835
Germany: Rost (Butt 46) - Baumann, Linke, Jeremies, Schneider (Asamoah 75), Ramelow, Ziege (Bohme 61), Hamann, Frings, Bierhoff, Neuville (Brdaric 80).
United States: Keller - Pope, Cherundolo (Sanneh 72), Agoos (Berhalter 72), Regis, Armas, Stewart, Donovan, Lewis (Jones 69), Mathis, Kirovski (Moore 59).

Mar 27 - Patras - friendly
Greece 3 (Tsartas pen 58, Vryzas 79, 85)
Belgium 2 (Goor 28, Sonck 54)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 9,400. **Ref:** Kapitanis (Gre)
Greece: Giannakopoulos (Kafes 46) - Goumas, Fissas, Patsatzoglou, Kyrgiakos, P Konstantinidis (Georgiadis 46), Tsartas (Basinas 61), Zagorakis (Vryzas 46), Nikopolidis, Machlas (Karagounis 61), Nikolaidis.
Belgium: De Vlieger (Herpoel 46) - Deflandre (J Peeters 74), Goor, M Mpenza, Van Kerckhoven, Simons (Baseggio 46), Verheyen (Boffin 57), Walem (Tanghe 46), Sonck, Van Buyten, Clement (Van Meir 46).

Mar 27 - Rotterdam - friendly
Holland 1 (F De Boer 31)
Spain 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 22,000. **Ref:** Nilsson (Swe)
Holland: Van der Sar (Waterreus 46) - Reiziger, Stam (Ooijer 46), F De Boer, Numan (Paauwe 70), Van Bommel (Landzaat 65), Cocu, Overmars (Sikora 68), Makaay (Ricksen 84), Kluivert, Hasselbaink.
Spain: Canizares - Puyol, Nadal (Curro Torres 76), Hierro (Cesar 46), Sergio, De Pedro (Vicente 68), Juanfran, Ivan Helguera (Capi 46), Joaquin (Tiko 46), Raul (Valeron 46), Morientes (Diego Tristan 46).

Mar 27 - Vaduz - friendly
Liechtenstein 0
Northern Ireland 0
Att: 1,080. **Ref:** Rogalia (Swi)
Liechtenstein: Jehle (Heeb 46) - Martin Stocklasa, Gigon, T Hassler, Zech, Michael Stocklasa, Telser, R Buchel, T Beck, Nigg (Burgmeier 73), M Beck.
Northern Ireland: Taylor (Carroll 46) - Lomas, McCann (Holmes 68), McCartney, Williams, Gillespie, Mulryne, Magilton, Johnson, Feeney (M Hughes 58), Healy (Elliott 84). *Sent off: Lomas 48min.*

Mar 27 - Hesperange - friendly
Luxembourg 0
Latvia 3 (Rubins 24, Laizans 58, Kolesnichenko 71)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 2,300. **Ref:** Sowa (Aut)
Luxembourg: Gillet - Schauls, F Deville, Leweck (Huss 59), Funck (Hoffman 72), Bollendorf, Peters, Holtz, Schneider (Di Domenico 79), Cardoni, Christophe.
Latvia: Kolinko (Pavlovs 82) - Zakresevskis, Isakovs (Korablovs 82), Lukasevics, Pucinsks, Bleidelis (Miholaps 75), Astafjevs (Zemlinskis 82), Laizans (Kolesnichenko 65), Rubins (Dobrecovs 65), Verpakovskis (Stolcers 53), Pahars.

Mar 27 - Valletta - friendly
Malta 1 (Theuma 87)
Andorra 1 (I Lima 78)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Podeshci (SaM)
Malta: Muscat - Theuma, Chetcuti, Said, Mamo (Miguel Mifsud 73), Camenzuli, Turner, Mallia (Bogdanovic 73), Michael Mifsud, Ciantar, Nwoko (A Mifsud 46).
Andorra: J L Alvarez - Ramirez, Garcia Luena, Fernandez, A Lima, I Lima, E Gonzalez (Ayala 77), J Sanchez, Sonejee (Ferron 88), Pol (Jonas 55), Ruiz Gonzalez.

Mar 27 - Chisinau - friendly
Moldova 0
Hungary 2 (Kenesei 14, Toth 50)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Godulyan (Ukr).
Moldova: Hmaruc - Catinsus, Rebeja (Andronic 46), Pogreban, Sosnovschi (Olexici 46), Covalenco, Boret, Ivanov (Covalciuc 44), Patula (Berco 65), Epureanu (Curtianu 66), Clescenco (Golban 75).
Hungary: Kiraly (Szucz 81) - Bodnar, Juhar, Matyus (Hrutka 76), V Sebok (Toth 46), Kenesei (M Feher 58), Kuttor, Dardai, Gera (Ferenczi 58), Lisztes (Baranyos 71), Kabat (Boor 46).

Mar 27 - Lodz - friendly
Poland 0
Japan 2 (H Nakata 10, Takahara 42)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Albrecht (Ger)
Poland: Dudek (Majdan 46) - Waldoch (J Bak 46), Hajto, Swierczewski (Karwan 46), Klos (Krzynowek 46), Michal Zewlakow, Kozminski, Kaluzny (A Bak 79), Olisadebe (Marcin Zewlakow 46), Kryszalowicz, Iwan.
Japan: Kawaguchi - K Nakata, Matsuda, Miyamoto, Ichikawa (Hato 71), Toda (Myojin 80), Ono, Takahara (Kubo 54), H Nakata, Suzuki, Inamoto (Fukunishi 54).

Mar 27 - Oporto - friendly
Portugal 1 (Sergio Conceicao 40)
Finland 4 (Kolkka 9, Forssell 27, Litmanen 42, 53)
HT: 1-3. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)
Portugal: Ricardo (Nelson 46) - Mario Silva (Caneira 46), Jorge Costa (Jorge Andrade 46), Fernando Couto, Frechaut, Petit (Bino 46), Sergio Conceicao, Vidigal (Hugo Viana 46), Simao (Nuno Gomes 28), Joao Pinto (Capucho 46), Pauleta.
Finland: A Niemi - Hyypia (Kuivasto 46), Tihinen, Reini, Saarinen (Hietanen 68), Kolkka, Nurmela (Roiha 82), Riihilahti (Gronlund 78), Tainio (Valakari 85) Forssell (Johansson 68), Litmanen.

Mar 27 - Dublin - friendly
Republic of Ireland 3 (Harte 19, Robbie Keane 54, Morrison 90)
Denmark 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 42,000. **Ref:** Lawlor (Wal)
Ireland: Kiely (Colgan 65) - G Kelly, Harte, Cunningham, Staunton, Kinsella (Healy 63), McAteer (Reid 66), Holland, Morrison, Robbie Keane (Connolly 76), Duff (Dunne 84).
Denmark: Sorensen (Kjaer 46) - Rytter, Henriksen, Laursen, Heintze (N Jensen 81), Poulsen, Steen Nielsen (Madsen 46), Gronkjaer, A Nielsen, Rommedahl (Lovenkrands 68), E Sand.

Mar 27 - Constanta - friendly
Romania 4 (D Munteanu 12, Pancu 16, 30, Ganea 36)
Ukraine 1 (Shyshchenko 49)
HT: 4-0. **Att:** 15,000
Romania: Lobont (Stelea 46) - Contra, Radoi (Rat 46), Filipescu (Soava 66), Chivu, Gheorghe Popescu (Cernat 46), Codrea (Ghioane 79), D Munteanu (Stoica 79), Ganea, Mutu (Niculescu 66), Pancu.
Ukraine: Reva (Levytskyi 46) - Parfyonov, Zadorozhnyi, Holovko, Vaschuk, Shyshchenko, Zubov (Tymoshchuk 46), Voronin (Melaschenko 54), Rebrov (Onyschenko 63), Husin (Maximov 46), Popov (Kormiltsev 46).

Mar 27 - Riyadh - friendly
Saudi Arabia 3 (O Al-Dosari 9, 18, A Al-Shahrani 17)
Uruguay 2 (Forlan 4, O'Neill 58)
HT: 3-1. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Al-Marzouki
Saudi Arabia: Babkr - Al-Tekar, Suleyman, Al-Duji, A Al-Shahrani, Al-Owairan, Al-Harbi (Al-Bahry 67), Mohammadi (Al-Jahani 35), Bin Shehan, I Al-Shahrani (Abdulkany 74), O Al-Dosari (Al-Whay 46).
Uruguay: Carini - Lembo, Damian Rodriguez, Lima, Varela, Garcia, O'Neill (R Olivera 72), Guigou (Romero 59), Magallanes, Recoba (R Morales 46), Forlan.

Mar 27 - Dakar - friendly
Senegal 2 (P B Diop 44, Niang 65)
Bolivia 1 (Bengolea 47)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Sowe (Gam)
Senegal: Sylva (Diallo 46) - Coly, Daf, A Cisse (M A Sarr 83), Diatta, P B Diop (P Sarr 87), Diao (Makhtar N'Diaye 73), Sylvain N'Diaye (S Camara 60), Fadiga (A Faye 77), Diouf (A Traore 89), Niang (Moussa N'Diaye 80).
Bolivia: Arias - Nay, Jiguchi, Escalante, Calustro (Camacho 46), Riviero, C Suarez (Cuellar 61), Andrianiris (Melgar 90), R Gutierrez, Guzman (Gil 77), Bengolea.

Mar 27 - Malmo - friendly
Sweden 1 (Allback 29)
Switzerland 1 (Cabanas 54)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 19,096. **Ref:** Ivanov (Rus)
Sweden: Hedman (Isaksson 46) - Mellberg, Michael Svensson, Mjallby, Edman, Linderoth (Lantz 46), Alexandersson (Jonsson 46), A Svensson (D Andersson 82), Blomqvist (Soderstrom 46), Larsson, Allback (Ibrahimovic 69).
Switzerland: Borer - Haas, L Magnin, Henchoz (Zwyssig 76), M Yakin, Celestini, Cabanas, Fournier, N'Kufo (Lombardo 46), H Yakin, Frei.

Mar 27 - Tunis - friendly
Tunisia 0
Norway 0
Att: 15,000. **Ref:** N'Baya (Lby)
Tunisia: El Ouaer - Thabet (Hammi 55), Jaidi, Mkacher (Marzouki 55), Mkademi (Ayari 70), H Trabelsi (Ouertami 72), Souayeh (Baya 53), Bouazizi (Jaballah 75), Gabsi, Jaziri (Jelassi 46), Ben Younes (Ben Choiukha 63).
Norway: Myhre - Aas, H Berg (Borgersen 46), Hoftun, Pereira, Sorensen, Riseth (Berg Hestad 58), Andersen, Winsnes, Rushfeldt, Flo (Brattbakk 22; Hoseth 82).

Mar 27 - Cardiff - friendly
Wales 0
Czech Republic 0
Att: 20,000. **Ref:** Larsen (Den)
Wales: Ward (Coyne 46) - Melville, J Robinson, Gabbidon, Hartson (Taylor 73), Delaney, Page, Davies, Koumas, Savage (Evans 73), Blake (Trollope 62).
Czech Republic: Cech (Vaniak 46) - Fukal, Smicer, Galasek (Kolousek 61), Lokvenc (Koller 46), Stajner (Sionko 46), Jankulovski (Holenak 82), Novotny (Johana 46), Rosicky (Hubschman 46), Poborsky, Ujfalusi.

Saturday, March 30

Mar 30 - Gaborone - Cosafa Castle Cup
Botswana 0
South Africa 0
Att: 25,000. **Ref:** Shikapande (Zam)
South Africa 5-4 on pens
Botswana: Marumo - Thobego, Kolagano, Gabanamong, Mothabane, Rasefako, Ntshweu (Gabanakgosi 74; Molwantwa 75), Marman (Mothuba 60), Pikati, Selolwane, Ranku.
South Africa: Marlin - Nzama, Booth, Molefe, Oldjohn, Pule, Mngomeni (Vilakazi 82), Sibaya, Mohlala, Manyatela (Maluleke 65).

Wednesday, April 3

Apr 3 - Denver - friendly
United States 1 (Mathis 66)
Mexico 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 48,476. **Ref:** Wright (Jam)
USA: Meola - Vanney (Llamosa 46), Pope, Hejduk, Mastroeni, Beasley, Mulrooney, Mathis, Jones (Maisonneuve 69), Donovan (West 77), Razov (Wolff 46).
Mexico: O Perez - A Rodriguez (Saavedra 46), Brown, Vidrio, H Morales, Villa (Mercado 58), Caballero (Johan Rodriguez 58), Luna, Mendoza (Bautista 46), Ochoa, Osorno (Garcia Aspe 67).

2002 OCEANIA NATIONS CUP

Preliminary round

At Apia, Western Samoa

Mar 9
American Samoa 0
New Caledonia 10 (Case 10, Pibke 11, 40, 54, 58, 70, Jose 25, Kauma 36, Wanakaija 55, Voudjo 74)
HT: 0-5

Mar 9
Samoa 2 (Timo 52, Lemana 83)
Tonga 0
HT: 0-0

Mar 12
American Samoa 2 (Atualevao 15, Afu 70)
Tonga 7 (Suli 3, 72, 80, Maamaloa 5, Taufahema 19, Uele 29, Fifita 32)
HT: 1-5

Mar 12
New Caledonia 1 (Voudjo 40)
Papua New Guinea 4 (Kombi 31, Tomda 57, Aisa 70, Davani 85)
HT: 1-1

Mar 14
Papua New Guinea 5 (Lohai 19, Moiyap 61, Davani 70, Aisa 84, Kassam 89)
Tonga 0
HT: 1-0

Mar 14
Samoa 5 (Timo 3, Faaiuaso 24, 68, Lemana 31, Fasavalu 48)
American Samoa 0
HT: 3-0

Mar 16
New Caledonia 9 (Faye 17, 85, Pibke 18, 26, 85, Voudjo 18, Kabeu 45, Kauma 74, Jose 90)
Tonga 0
HT: 5-0

Mar 16
Samoa 1 (Lemana 56)
Papua New Guinea 4 (Kombi 20, Wasi 30, Elizah 60, Moiyap 76)
HT: 0-2

Mar 18
American Samoa 0
Papua New Guinea 7 (Davani 12, 20, 43, Lohai 61, Posman 32, Aisa 46, Wasi 90)
HT: 0-4

Mar 18
Samoa 0
New Caledonia 5 (Kauma 10, Hay 41, 69, Pibke 59, Mapou 89)
HT: 0-2

ONC PRLM - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Papua NG	4	4	0	0	20	2	12
New Caledonia	4	3	0	1	25	4	9
Samoa	4	2	0	2	8	9	6
Tonga	4	1	0	3	7	18	3
American Samoa	4	0	0	4	2	29	0

*Papua New Guinea and *New Caledonia qualify for Oceania Nations Cup finals*
**Subject to approval by the Oceania confederation*

OTHER GAMES

Mar 10 - Florence - friendly
Saudi Arabia 0
Bulgaria B 0
Att: 2,000

Mar 27 - San Jose - friendly
Costa Rica 0
Morocco U-23 1 (Bouden 51)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,000
Costa Rica: Lonnis (Mesen 46) - Madrigal, Wright, G Martinez (Esquivel 46), Jara, Berry, Sanchez (Sunsing 68), Lopez, Rojas, Fonseca, Bryce (R Cordero 46).
Morocco U-23: Bagui (Sami 26) - Kadouri, Souidi, Messloub, Armoumen, Bouab, Souidi, Bekari, Bouden (Zerouk 86), Benkaour, Madihi.

EUROPE

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

2nd group phase

Group A

March 13

Manchester United 0
Bayern Munich 0
Att: 66,818. **Ref:** Veissiere (Fra)
Man Utd: Barthez - G Neville, Blanc, Johnsen, Silvestre - Beckham, Keane, Veron, Giggs - Van Nistelrooy, Solskjaer (Forlan 78).
Bayern: Kahn - Kuffour, Linke, R Kovac, Lizarazu - Hargreaves, Effenberg, Jeremies (Fink 73) - Santa Cruz (Zickler 77), Pizarro, Paulo Sergio (Elber 83).

Nantes 1 (Moldovan 43)
Boavista 1 (Martelinho 78)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 28,554. **Ref:** Dallas (Sco)
Nantes: Landreau - Cetto, Yepes, Gillet, Bilayi Ateba - Da Rocha, Djemba, Savinaud (Laspalles 52), Quint (Devineau 61) - Moldovan (Vahirua 46), Andre.
Boavista: Ricardo - Rui Oscar, Paulo Turra, Jorge Silva, Pedro Emanuel, Erivan - Duda, Petit, Pedro Santos (Sanchez 46), Rui Lima (Martelinho 46) - Goulart (Marcio 61).

March 19

Bayern Munich 2 (Jeremies 57, Pizarro 87)
Nantes 1 (Ahamada 53)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 32,000. **Ref:** Fisker (Den)
Bayern: Kahn - Hargreaves, Kuffour, Linke, Tarnat - Jeremies, Effenberg (Salihamidzic 46), Fink - Santa Cruz (Zickler 72), Pizarro, Paulo Sergio (Feulner 85).
Nantes: Grondin - Deroff, Cetto, Gillet, Bilayi Ateba (Laspalles 64) - Rubil, Toulalan, Armand, Pallieres, Devineau (Berson 78) - Ahamada (Nzigou 64).

Boavista 0
Manchester United 3 (Blanc 14, Solskjaer 29, Beckham pen 51)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 13,223. **Ref:** Plautz (Aut)
Boavista: Ricardo - Frechaut, Paulo Turra, Pedro Emanuel, Mario Loja - Petit, Jorge Silva (Martelinho 33), Sanchez - Duda (Marcio 58), Silva (Goulart 21), Serginho.
Man Utd: Barthez - G Neville, Blanc (O'Shea 72), Johnsen (P Neville 72), Silvestre - Beckham, Scholes (Stewart 58), Butt, Giggs - Forlan, Solskjaer.

GROUP A - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	6	3	3	0	13	3	12
Bayern Munich	6	3	3	0	5	2	12
Boavista	6	1	2	3	2	8	5
Nantes	6	0	2	4	4	11	2

Group B

March 13

Barcelona 0
Liverpool 0
Att: 75,362. **Ref:** Vassaras (Gre)
Barcelona: Bonano - Puyol, Christanval, De Boer, Coco - Luis Enrique (Gerard 77), Cocu, Rivaldo, Motta - Saviola (Geovanni 88), Kluivert.
Liverpool: Dudek - Abel Xavier, Henchoz, Hyypia, Carragher - Murphy, Gerrard (Barmby 80), Hamann, Riise - Litmanen (Smicer 70), Heskey (Baros 74).

Roma 1 (Cafu 52)
Galatasaray 1 (Umit Karan 45)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 58,630. **Ref:** Frisk (Swe)
Roma: Antonioli - Zebina (Aldair 46), Samuel, Panucci - Cafu, Emerson, Lima, Candela - Totti - Montella (Batistuta 54), Delvecchio (Assuncao 82).
Galatasaray: Mondragon - Perez (Capone 83), Emre Asik, Bulent Korkmaz, Victoria - Berkant, Fleurquin, Ayhan, Ergun, Hasan Sas - Umit Karan (Niculescu 83).

March 19

Galatasaray 0
Barcelona 1 (Luis Enrique 58)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 22,000. **Ref:** Temmink (Hol)
Galatasaray: Mondragon - Perez (Capone 78), Emre Asik, Bulent Korkmaz, Ergun - Fleurquin, Ayhan (Niculescu 62), Hasan Sas - Berkant - Arif (Suat 74), Umit Karan.
Barcelona: Bonano - Puyol, Christanval, Abelardo, Coco - Rochemback, Xavi, Luis Enrique (Reiziger 88), Gabri - Overmars (Motta 82) - Kluivert.

Liverpool 2 (Litmanen pen 7, Heskey 64)
Roma 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 41,794. **Ref:** Pedersen (Nor)
Liverpool: Dudek - Abel Xavier, Henchoz, Hyypia, Carragher - Smicer (McAllister 90), Murphy, Gerrard, Riise - Litmanen (Biscan 87), Heskey.
Roma: Antonioli - Panucci, Samuel, Aldair - Tommasi, Assuncao (Cassano 69), Emerson, Lima (Delvecchio 46), Candela - Totti, Batistuta (Montella 46).

GROUP B - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	6	2	3	1	7	7	9
Liverpool	6	1	4	1	4	4	7
Roma	6	1	4	1	6	5	7
Galatasaray	6	0	5	1	5	6	5

Liverpool finished second on better head-to-head record

Group C

March 12

FC Porto 2 (Deco 12, Pena 54)
Panathinaikos 1 (Kolkka 65)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Michel (Slk)
Porto: Paulo Santos - Secretario, Ricardo Silva, Jorge Andrade, Soderstrom - Costinha, Deco (Helder Postiga 90), Paredes - Capucho, Pena (Pavlin 84), Clayton (Candido Costa 68). *Sent off: Secretario 79min.*
Panathinaikos: Nikopolidis - Saric, Henriksen, Kyrgiakos, Vokolos (Vlaovic 71) - Basinas, Karagounis, Jarni (Kolkka 35), Fissas - Limberopoulos, Constantinou (Olisadebe 31).

Real Madrid 3 (Solari 60, Guti 64, Savio 71)
Sparta Prague 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Poll (Eng)
Real Madrid: Casillas - Geremi, Ivan Helguera (Morientes 76), Pavon, Raul Bravo - Flavio, Celades - McManaman (Savio 53), Guti, Solari (Minambres 63) - Munitis.
Sparta: Cech - Cizek, Novotny, Hubschman, Flachbart - Klein, Abanda (Babnic 66) - Sionko, Jarosik, Michalik - Kincl.

March 20

Panathinaikos 2 (Limberopoulos 9, Goumas 64)
Real Madrid 2 (Morientes 11, Portillo 80)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 17,000. **Ref:** Messina (Ita)
Panathinaikos: Nikopolidis - Seitaridis, Henriksen, Goumas, Fissas - Michaelsen, Karagounis, Galletto - Vlaovic (Warzycha 85), Limberopoulos (Vokolos 76), Constantinou (Olisadebe 70).
Real Madrid: Casillas - Geremi, Ruben, Ivan Campo, Raul Bravo - Minambres, Celades, Flavio, McManaman (Solari 80) - Savio (Valdo 74), Morientes (Portillo 60).

Sparta Prague 2 (Sionko 62, Jarosik 71)
FC Porto 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,521. **Ref:** Stark (Ger)
Sparta: Cech - Flachbart, Grygera, Novotny, Mares - Sionko (Klein 90), Jarosik, Hubschman, Cizek - Hartig (Babnic 74), Kincl (Zavadil 46).
Porto: Paulo Santos - Ibarra, Ricardo Silva, Jorge Andrade, Mario Silva - Costinha (Rafael 64), Deco (Soderstrom 72), Paredes - Capucho, Helder Postiga (Pena 46), Clayton.

GROUP C - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	6	5	1	0	14	5	16
Panathinaikos	6	2	2	2	7	8	8
Sparta Prague	6	2	0	4	6	10	6
FC Porto	6	1	1	4	3	7	4

Group D

March 12

Arsenal 0
Deportivo La Coruna 2 (Valeron 30, Naybet 40)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 35,392. **Ref:** Meier (Swi)
Arsenal: Seaman - Lauren, Stepanovs, Campbell, Luzhnyi - Wiltord (Kanu 64), Grimandi (Ljungberg 64), Vieira, Pires - Bergkamp, Henry.
Deportivo: Molina - Scaloni, Cesar, Naybet, Romero - Sergio, Mauro Silva - Victor, Valeron (Duscher 80), Fran (Capdevila 71) - Diego Tristan (Makaay 85).

Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Butt pen 24, Brdaric 71, Babic 90)
Juventus 1 (Tudor 61)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 22,000. **Ref:** Milton Nielsen (Den)
Leverkusen: Butt - Sebescen, Lucio, Nowotny (Vranjes 12), Placente - Schneider, Ramelow, Basturk (Kleine 90), Ze Roberto - Berbatov (Babic 83), Brdaric.
Juventus: Buffon - Zenoni, Birindelli, Ferrara, Pessotto (Tudor 46) - Zambrotta, Conte (Maresca 46), Tacchinardi, Nedved - Amoruso (Zalayeta 61), Trezeguet.

March 20

Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Diego Tristan 75)
Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Ballack 34, Schneider 54, Neuville 86)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 28,000. **Ref:** Ivanov (Rus)
Deportivo: Nuno - Hector (Diego Tristan 68), Cesar, Naybet, Capdevila - Duscher (Valeron 61), Mauro Silva - Pandiani (Sergio 61), Djalminha, Amavisca - Makaay.
Leverkusen: Butt - Lucio, Nowotny, Placente - Sebescen, Schneider (Zivkovic 89), Ramelow, Ze Roberto - Basturk (Vranjes 88), Ballack - Brdaric (Neuville 64).

Juventus 1 (Zalayeta 76)
Arsenal 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 7,470. **Ref:** Nilsson (Swe)
Juventus: Carini - Zenoni, Birindelli, Iuliano, Paramatti (Pessotto 24) - Zambrotta (Amoruso 70), Maresca, Conte, Davids, Guzman (Pericard 61) - Zalayeta.
Arsenal: Seaman - Dixon, Luzhnyi, Campbell, Lauren (Cole 81) - Ljungberg, Vieira, Edu (Wiltord 79), Pires - Kanu, Henry.

GROUP D - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayer Leverkusen	6	3	1	2	11	11	10
Dep La Coruna	6	3	1	2	7	6	10
Arsenal	6	2	1	3	8	8	7
Juventus	6	2	1	3	7	8	7

Leverkusen finished top on better head-to-head record

Top two from each group qualified for quarter-finals

Quarter-finals, 1st legs

April 2

Bayern Munich 2 (Effenberg 82, Pizarro 88)
Real Madrid 1 (Geremi 11)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 60,000. **Ref:** Dallas (Sco)
Bayern: Kahn - Sagnol (Salihamidzic 63), Kuffour, R Kovac, Lizarazu - Hargreaves, Effenberg, Jeremies (N Kovac 83), Paulo Sergio (Pizarro 63) - Santa Cruz, Elber.
Real Madrid: Cesar - Michel Salgado, Hierro, Pavon, Roberto Carlos - Geremi (Flavio 83), Makelele, Ivan Helguera, Solari (McManaman 76) - Zidane - Raul.

Deportivo La Coruna 0
Manchester United 2 (Beckham 15, Van Nistelrooy 41)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 35,351. **Ref:** Vassaras (Gre)
Deportivo: Molina - Scaloni, Cesar, Naybet, Romero - Sergio, Mauro Silva - Victor (Duscher 87), Valeron (Djalminha 68), Fran (Makaay 60) - Diego Tristan.
Man Utd: Barthez - G Neville, Blanc, Johnsen, Silvestre - Beckham (P Neville 90), Keane (Fortune 44), Butt, Scholes - Giggs - Van Nistelrooy (Solskjaer 76).

April 3

Liverpool 1 (Hyypia 44)
Bayer Leverkusen 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 42,454. **Ref:** Frisk (Swe)
Liverpool: Dudek - Carragher, Henchoz, Hyypia, Riise - Gerrard, Hamann, Murphy, Smicer (Berger 75) - Heskey, Owen (Litmanen 70).
Leverkusen: Butt - Sebescen, Ramelow, Lucio, Placente - Schneider, Ballack - Neuville (Kirsten 74), Basturk, Ze Roberto - Berbatov (Zivkovic 65).

Panathinaikos 1 (Basinas pen 79)
Barcelona 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 17,000. **Ref:** Hauge (Nor)
Panathinaikos: Nikopolidis - Henriksen, Saric, Kyrgiakos, Fissas - Goumas, Basinas, Kolkka - Limberopoulos (Boateng 60) - Constantinou (Vokolos 90), Vlaovic (Olisadebe 74).
Barcelona: Bonano - Puyol, Abelardo, De Boer, Coco (Reiziger 68) - Gabri, Cocu (Xavi 54), Rochemback (Rivaldo 72) - Motta - Overmars, Kluivert.

UEFA CUP

Quarter-finals, 1st legs

March 14

Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr) 1 (Clescenco 32)
Milan (Ita) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Lopez Nieto (Spa)
Played in Nicosia, Cyprus
Hapoel: Elimelech - Bachar, Domb, Gershon, Antebi - Onyschenko, Abuksis, Halmai, Pisont (Toema 68) - Clescenco (Balili 81), Osterc.
Milan: Abbiati - Contra, Roque Junior, Costacurta, Chamot - Albertini, Ambrosini (Kaladze 77) - Jose Mari, Rui Costa (Pirlo 65), Serginho - Javi Moreno.

Internazionale (Ita) 1 (Materazzi 51)
Valencia (Spa) 1 (Rufete 64)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 24,184. **Ref:** Merk (Ger)
Inter: Fontana - J Zanetti, Cordoba, Materazzi, Simic - Sergio Conceicao (Recoba 79), Di Biagio, Seedorf, Guglielminpietro (Dalmat 72) - Ventola, Kallon.
Valencia: Canizares - Curro Torres, Ayala, Pellegrino, Carboni - De los Santos, Albelda - Rufete (Sanchez 90), Aimar (Vicente 58), Kily Gonzalez - Carew (Angulo 63). *Sent off: Kily Gonzalez 55min.*

PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 1 (Kezman 47)
Feyenoord (Hol) 1 (Van Hooijdonk 45)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 32,500. **Ref:** Collina (Ita)
PSV: Waterreus - Bogelund, Ooijer, Hofland, Heintze (Gakhokidze 56) - Rommedahl, Van Bommel, Lucius (De Jong 73), Bouma - Kezman, Vennegoor of Hesselink (Bruggink 83).
Feyenoord: Zoetebier - Emerton, Loovens, Van Wonderen, Rzasa - Kalou (Smolarek 78), Bosvelt, Ono, Van Persie - Tomasson (Elmander 82), Van Hooijdonk.

Slovan Liberec (Cze) 0
Borussia Dortmund (Ger) 0
Att: 14,458. **Ref:** Melo Pereira (Por)
Liberec: Kinsky - Pilny, Valachovic, Holenak, Janu - Johana, Langer, Kolousek, Zboncak - Stajner, Nezmar.
Dortmund: Lehmann - Evanilson, Worns, Kohler (Metzelder 69), Heinrich - Stevic, Rosicky, Oliseh - Ewerthon (Odonkor 62), Koller, Amoroso (Ricken 85).

Quarter-finals, 2nd legs

March 21

Borussia Dortmund 4 (Amoroso 51, Koller 57, Ricken 69, Ewerthon 89)
Slovan Liberec 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 36,500. **Ref:** Braschi (Ita)
Dortmund 4-0 on agg
Dortmund: Lehmann - Heinrich, Worns, Metzelder, Dede - Reuter, Rosicky (Oliseh 77), Ricken (Stevic 73) - Evanilson, Koller, Amoroso (Ewerthon 73).
Liberec: Kinsky - Pilny, Holenak, Johana, Janu - Capek (Hodur 59), Langer, Kolousek, Zboncak (Jun 81) - Stajner, Nezmar (Gyan 59).

Feyenoord 1 (Van Hooijdonk 90)
PSV Eindhoven 1 (Van Bommel 76)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 43,000. **Ref:** Barber (Eng)
Agg 2-2. Feyenoord 5-4 on pens
Feyenoord: Zoetebier - Emerton, Van Wonderen, Paauwe, Rzasa (Leonardo Santiago 85) - Kalou, Bosvelt, Ono, Van Persie (Smolarek 71) - Tomasson (Elmander 85), Van Hooijdonk.
PSV: Waterreus - Bogelund, Faber, Ooijer, Heintze - Rommedahl (Gakhokidze 78), Van Bommel, Bouma, Lucius (Ramzi 65) - Kezman, Vennegoor of Hesselink (Bruggink 90). *Sent off: Van Bommel 95min.*

Milan 2 (Rui Costa 5, Gershon og 45)
Hapoel Tel Aviv 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 23,184. **Ref:** Fandel (Ger)
Milan 2-1 on agg
Milan: Abbiati - Chamot, Laursen, Costacurta, Kaladze - Gattuso, Albertini, Ambrosini - Rui Costa (Brocchi 90) - Inzaghi (Javi Moreno 90), Simone (Donati 80).
Hapoel: Elimelech - Bachar, Domb, Gershon, Hillel (Udi 88) - Onyschenko (Toema 66), Abuksis, Halmai, Pisont - Osterc, Clescenco (Balili 72).

Valencia 0
Internazionale 1 (Ventola 3)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 45,000. **Ref:** Colombo (Fra)
Inter 2-1 on agg
Valencia: Canizares - Curro Torres, Ayala (Djukic 15), Pellegrino, Fabio Aurelio - De los Santos (Baraja 46), Albelda (Mista 72) - Rufete, Aimar, Vicente - Carew.
Inter: Toldo - J Zanetti, Cordoba, Materazzi, Gresko - Sergio Conceicao (Seedorf 58), Di Biagio, Farinos, Guglielminpietro (Simic 76) - Ventola (Dalmat 65), Kallon. *Sent off: Toldo 89min.*

Semi-finals, 1st legs

April 4

Borussia Dortmund 4 (Amoroso pen 8, 34, 39, Heinrich 62)
Milan 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 51,000. **Ref:** Poll (Eng)
Dortmund: Lehmann - Heinrich (Evanilson 70), Worns, Metzelder, Dede (Kohler 76) - Reuter, Oliseh - Rosicky - Ewerthon (Reina 88), Koller, Amoroso.
Milan: Abbiati - Contra (Roque Junior 64), Laursen, Maldini, Kaladze - Gattuso (Rui Costa 60), Albertini (Serginho 46), Ambrosini, Pirlo - Jose Mari, Inzaghi.

Internazionale 0
Feyenoord 1 (Cordoba og 50)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 39,622. **Ref:** Michel (Slk)
Inter: Fontana - Simic, Cordoba, Materazzi, Gresko - Sergio Conceicao, Di Biagio, Emre (Seedorf 56), Guglielminpietro (Recoba 78) - Ventola, Kallon (Ronaldo 70).
Feyenoord: Zoetebier - Emerton, Van Wonderen, Paauwe, Rzasa - Kalou (Aros 87), Bosvelt, Ono, Van Persie (Elmander 84) - Van Hooijdonk, Tomasson.

AUSTRIA

Mar 6: Karnten 0 FC Tirol 2; Rapid Wien 1 Austria Wien 1.
Mar 9: Bregenz 1 Sturm Graz 1; Grazer AK 0 Salzburg 0; Rapid Wien 2 Karnten 0; SV Ried 0 Admira 0.
Mar 10: FC Tirol 2 Austria Wien 0.
Mar 16: Admira 0 Grazer AK 2; Austria Wien 2 SV Ried 0; Sturm Graz 1 Rapid Wien 0; Salzburg 2 Bregenz 1.
Mar 17: Karnten 2 FC Tirol 1.
Mar 23: Bregenz 5 Admira 1; Rapid Wien 1 Grazer AK 1; SV Ried 1 Karnten 0; FC Tirol 1 Salzburg 0.
Mar 24: Sturm Graz 1 Austria Wien 2.
Mar 30: Admira 0 Bregenz 2; Austria Wien 3 Sturm Graz 0; Karnten 2 SV Ried 1; Salzburg 1 FC Tirol 1.
Mar 31: Grazer AK 2 Rapid Wien 2.
Apr 2: Austria Wien 1 Salzburg 0; FC Tirol 2 Admira 1.
Apr 3: Bregenz 3 Rapid Wien 0; SV Ried 0 Grazer AK 1; Sturm Graz 5 Karnten 1.

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Tirol	29	21	4	4	54	10	67
Grazer AK	29	13	10	6	54	35	49
Sturm Graz	29	13	10	6	48	31	49
Austria Wien	29	11	9	9	39	30	42
Karnten	29	12	6	11	31	40	42
Salzburg	29	10	8	11	28	30	38
Bregenz	29	9	8	12	41	56	35
Rapid Wien	29	8	8	13	26	37	32
SV Ried	29	7	8	14	31	44	29
Admira	29	3	5	21	18	57	14

BELGIUM

Friday, March 8

Genk 2 (Sonck 81, Chatelle 85)
Gent 1 (Vanic 23) Att: 20,827

La Louviere 2 (Tilmant 7, 54)
Charleroi 1 (Siquet og 10) Att: 6,000

Saturday, March 9

Anderlecht 2 (De Bilde 11, Stoica 61)
Lommel 0 Att: 22,850

Beveren 1 (Danilevicius 62)
RWDM 3 (Origi 9, Magro 19, Mitu 89) Att: 3,500

Lierse 3 (Huysegems 71, Thompson 75, Sels 89)
Eendracht Aalst 1 (Stojak 88) Att: 6,000

Lokeren 0
St Truiden 1 (Mbonabucya 56) Att: 3,500

Westerlo 0
Mouscron 2 (Marcin Zewlakow 83, Dugardein 85) Att: 4,500

Sunday, March 10

Club Brugge 3 (Mendoza 7, Englebert 46, Verheyen 78)
Germinal Beerschot 2 (Kpaka 49, 85) Att: 18,167

Royal Antwerp 0
Standard 0 Att: 7,000

Wednesday, March 13

Genk 1 (Thijs 36)
Anderlecht 1 (Baseggio pen 45) Att: 23,551

Saturday, March 16

Charleroi 1 (Rojas 55)
Anderlecht 1 (De Bilde 47) Att: 15,105

Gent 2 (Vanic pen 41, Kaklamanos 62)
Lierse 3 (Seslar 51, De Roeck 68, Huysegems 82) Att: 9,200

Germinal Beerschot 1 (Kpaka 73)
Westerlo 1 (Van den Bossche 3) Att: 8,000

Lommel 1 (Waligora 79)
Genk 5 (Sonck 29, 48, Noben og 61, Dagano 71, 84) Att: 12,000

Mouscron 4 (Marcin Zewlakow 38, Mpenza 75, Vidovic 83, Gregoire 85)
Lokeren 0 Att: 7,500

Standard 1 (Lukunku 60)
La Louviere 2 (Tilmant 10, Buelinckx 47) Att: 18,000

Sunday, March 17

Eendracht Aalst 1 (Klomp 14)
Club Brugge 1 (Sillah 53) Att: 6,000

RWDM 2 (Fassotte 4, Thiago 68)
Royal Antwerp 0 Att: 4,000

St Truiden 4 (Boffin pen 14, Mbonabucya 51, 70, Pereira 60)
Beveren 2 (Demets 43, Danilevicius pen 75) Att: 4,000

Friday, March 22

Anderlecht 0
Standard 0 Att: 25,952

Saturday, March 23

Beveren 0
Mouscron 1 (Marcin Zewlakow 86) Att: 3,000

Genk 3 (Dagano 9, Sonck 13, Thijs 43)
Charleroi 2 (Pivaljevic 82, Di Gregorio 86) Att: 20,394

Lierse 6 (Thompson 5, Shekiladze 65, Laeremans 80, Huysegems 81, 86, Sikimic 90)
Lommel 3 (Waligora 41, Tankary 57, 73) Att: 5,000

Lokeren 2 (Gretarsson pen 84, Bangoura 90)
Westerlo 0 Att: 4,250

Royal Antwerp 4 (Sergeant 68, 87, 89, Goots 74)
St Truiden 1 (Pereira 51) Att: 3,800

Sunday, March 24

Club Brugge 0
Gent 1 (Kaklamanos 56) Att: 20,215

Eendracht Aalst 3 (Arts 5, Stojak pen 11, Carrez 16)
Germinal Beerschot 3 (Kpaka 53, Snelders 66, 90) Att: 3,000

La Louviere 1 (Tilmant pen 77)
RWDM 0 Att: 4,000

Saturday, March 30

Charleroi 3 (Pivaljevic 41, 50, 79)
Lierse 1 (Thompson 66) Att: 12,000

Gent 2 (Kaklamanos 34, Oyawole 79)
Eendracht Aalst 2 (Stojak 38, Joly 47) Att: 7,926

Germinal Beerschot 0
Lokeren 0 Att: 7,500

Lommel 0
Club Brugge 2 (Van der Heyden 55, Martens 85) Att: 8,000

Mouscron 5 (Marcin Zewlakow 7, 55, Mpenza 39, Pinxten og 81, Gregoire 82)
Royal Antwerp 1 (Yattara 17) Att: 9,000

St Truiden 1 (Caers 68)
La Louviere 0 Att: 3,500

Standard 2 (Lukunku pen 41, Cavens 55)
Genk 0 Att: 18,000

Westerlo 1 (Severeyns 90)
Beveren 0 Att: 4,000

Monday, April 1

RWDM 2 (Fassotte pen 45, Origi 48)
Anderlecht 3 (Stoica 15, Smet og 57, Hendrikx 74) Att: 12,000

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Brugge	29	20	2	7	66	34	62
Genk	29	17	10	2	76	39	61
Anderlecht	29	16	10	3	63	31	58
Mouscron	29	16	4	9	64	33	52
Standard	28	14	8	6	50	31	50
Gent	29	13	9	7	50	43	48
Lokeren	29	13	8	8	37	29	47
St Truiden	29	13	4	12	42	42	43
G Beerschot	28	8	13	7	52	42	37
Charleroi	29	10	6	13	36	51	36
RWDM	29	10	4	15	39	50	34
Westerlo	29	9	6	14	44	52	33
La Louviere	29	8	8	13	33	51	32
Lierse	29	8	7	14	50	58	31
Lommel	29	8	7	14	45	58	31
Royal Antwerp	29	6	8	15	40	60	26
Eendracht Aalst	29	4	8	17	26	63	20
Beveren	29	2	8	19	29	75	14

LEADING GOALSCORERS

28	Wesley Sonck (Genk)
20	Rune Lange (Club Brugge)
18	Beli Moumouni Dagano (Genk)
17	Paul Kpaka (Germinal Beerschot)

BULGARIA

Regular season

Mar 10: Marek 1 Levski 1; Chernomorets 3 Beroe 0; Spartak Pleven 1 Slavia 2; Belasitsa 0 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 2; Lokomotiv Sofia 0 Naftex 0; Spartak Varna 0 Cherno More 0; CSKA 1 Lovech 1.
Mar 13: Cherno More 1 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 3.
Mar 16: Lokomotiv Plovdiv 2 CSKA 1; Beroe 1 Lokomotiv Sofia 1; Slavia 3 Chernomorets 1; Cherno More 3 Marek 1; Levski 4 Spartak Pleven 1; Naftex 1 Belasitsa 0; Lovech 1 Spartak Varna 1.
Mar 23: Spartak Pleven 3 Cherno More 1; Belasitsa 2 Lokomotiv Sofia 1; Chernomorets 1 Levski 2; Slavia 3 Beroe 2; Marek 0 Lovech 1.
Mar 24: CSKA 3 Naftex 0; Spartak Varna 1 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1.
Mar 31: Levski 3 Slavia 1; Beroe 1 Belasitsa 0; Naftex 4 Spartak Varna 1; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 4 Marek 1; Cherno More 3 Chernomorets 1; Lokomotiv Sofia 1 CSKA 0; Lovech 6 Spartak Pleven 2.

BULGARIA – REGULAR SEASON FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Levski	26	20	5	1	58	21	65
Lovech	26	16	7	3	50	27	55
Lok Plovdiv	26	16	5	5	44	23	53
CSKA	26	15	7	4	48	17	52
Naftex	26	12	6	8	35	25	42
Slavia	26	10	7	9	30	32	37
Spartak Pleven	26	10	3	13	40	44	33
Lok Sofia	26	7	8	11	33	32	29
Spartak Varna	26	5	11	10	29	39	26
Chernomorets	26	7	5	14	24	54	26
Cherno More	26	6	6	14	28	36	24
Marek	26	6	6	14	22	44	24
Belasitsa	26	6	5	15	21	35	23
Beroe	26	3	5	18	13	46	14

Top six now contest championship play-offs; bottom eight contest relegation play-offs

CROATIA

Mar 9: Slaven 0 Cibalia 0; Hajduk 1 Zadar 0; Cakovec 0 Dinamo 2; Hrvatski drag 0 Sibenik 4; Rijeka 2 TSK 0; Kamen Ingrad 2 Pomorac 1; Zagreb 1 Marsonia 1.
Mar 10: Osijek 1 Varteks 2.
Mar 16: Pomorac 2 Hrvatski drag 0; Dinamo 4 Kamen Ingrad 0; Sibenik 3 Slaven 0; Cakovec 0 Osijek 2; Zadar 2 Rijeka 0; Marsonia 1 Varteks 1.
Mar 17: TSK 0 Zagreb 2; Cibalia 1 Hajduk 1.
Mar 23: Hrvatski drag 1 Dinamo 1; Hajduk 1 Sibenik 0; Varteks 4 TSK 0; Slaven 3 Pomorac 0; Kamen Ingrad 3 Cakovec 2; Rijeka 1 Cibalia 1; Osijek 4 Marsonia 1.
Mar 24: Zagreb 1 Zadar 1.
Mar 30: Dinamo 4 Slaven 1; TSK 0 Marsonia 5; Cakovec 2 Hrvatski drag 0; Cibalia 2 Zagreb 1; Kamen Ingrad 2 Osijek 4; Pomorac 0 Hajduk 1; Sibenik 0 Rijeka 1; Zadar 3 Varteks 4.

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zagreb	25	18	5	2	65	21	59
Dinamo	25	16	5	4	47	22	53
Hajduk	25	16	5	4	47	25	53
Varteks	25	15	6	4	53	30	51
Rijeka	25	12	5	8	36	28	41
Slaven	25	8	9	8	27	30	33
Cakovec	25	9	4	12	29	35	31
Pomorac	25	9	3	13	28	36	30
Hrvatski drag	25	8	6	11	28	37	30
Osijek	25	9	2	14	37	43	29
Cibalia	25	7	7	11	26	32	28
Marsonia	25	7	6	12	30	36	27
Sibenik	25	7	6	12	20	29	27
Zadar	25	6	8	11	29	39	26
Kamen Ingrad	25	6	7	12	23	40	25
TSK	25	4	2	19	28	70	14

CZECH REPUBLIC

Mar 6: Teplice 0 Jablonec 0.
Mar 8: Brno 0 Slavia 0.
Mar 9: Opava 0 Hradec Kralove 0; Sparta 1 Olomouc 0; Bohemians 1 Jablonec 2; Teplice 4 Ostrava 0.
Mar 10: Liberec 2 Pribram 0; Chmel Blsany 0 Zizkov 0; Synot 3 Drnovice 1.
Mar 15: Slavia 2 Bohemians 2.
Mar 17: Hradec Kralove 3 Teplice 0; Ostrava 1 Brno 1; Jablonec 1 Synot 2; Drnovice 2 Chmel Blsany 0; Zizkov 1 Sparta 1; Olomouc 0 Liberec 0; Pribram 2 Opava 0.
Mar 22: Bohemians 0 Ostrava 4.
Mar 23: Pribram 0 Hradec Kralove 0; Opava 1 Olomouc 1; Sparta 3 Drnovice 0; Chmel Blsany 1 Jablonec 1; Synot 1 Slavia 3; Brno 2 Teplice 1.
Mar 24: Liberec 1 Zizkov 0.
Mar 30: Slavia 3 Chmel Blsany 1; Jablonec 2 Sparta 0; Drnovice 1 Liberec 3; Olomouc 1 Pribram 2.
Mar 31: Hradec Kralove 0 Brno 0; Teplice 3 Bohemians 2; Ostrava 1 Synot 1.
Apr 1: Zizkov 2 Opava 0.

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liberec	24	16	6	2	44	18	54
Sparta	24	17	2	5	48	14	53
Zizkov	24	16	4	4	36	16	52
Bohemians	24	12	6	6	36	26	42
Slavia	24	10	8	6	40	29	38
Ostrava	24	10	8	6	35	27	38
Brno	24	10	7	7	28	33	37
Jablonec	24	7	10	7	24	25	31
Synot	24	8	5	11	24	32	29
Pribram	24	8	5	11	21	29	29
Hradec Kralove	24	7	6	11	23	36	27
Teplice	24	7	5	12	27	36	26
Olomouc	24	5	9	10	21	30	24
Drnovice	24	6	5	13	28	34	23
Chmel Blsany	24	5	3	16	25	44	18
Opava	24	2	3	19	15	46	9

DENMARK

Mar 10: Midtjylland 1 Silkeborg 0; Esbjerg 5 Lyngby 0; Vejle 1 FC Copenhagen 3; AGF 1 OB 3; Brondby 2 Viborg 2.
Mar 11: AaB 2 AB 1.
Mar 13: Silkeborg 0 Esbjerg 0.
Mar 14: AB 0 Midtjylland 1.
Mar 17: AB 1 Brondby 2; Viborg 0 AGF 0; OB 1 Vejle 0; FC Copenhagen 6 Esbjerg 0; Lyngby 0 Silkeborg 5.
Mar 18: Midtjylland 0 AaB 1.
Mar 24: Vejle 0 Midtjylland 0; Esbjerg 2 AGF 0; Silkeborg 1 Brondby 2; Lyngby 0 AaB 7; FC Copenhagen 0 AB 0; OB 0 Viborg 1.
Apr 1: AaB 0 Silkeborg 2; Brondby 1 Esbjerg 0; AGF 0 Vejle 0; Viborg 0 FC Copenhagen 2; AB 3 Lyngby 0; Midtjylland 0 OB 1.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brondby	24	16	5	3	55	19	53
FC Copenhagen	24	12	8	4	40	18	44
AaB	24	13	4	7	40	31	43
OB	24	10	8	6	37	33	38
Esbjerg	24	11	4	9	36	34	37
AB	24	9	9	6	36	25	36
Midtjylland	24	8	9	7	28	20	33
Viborg	24	6	10	8	26	29	28
Silkeborg	24	6	5	13	26	32	23
Vejle	24	5	6	13	28	55	21
AGF	24	4	8	12	26	38	20
Lyngby	24	2	8	14	20	64	14

ENGLAND

Saturday, March 9

Leicester 1 (Scowcroft 20)
Charlton 1 (Euell 42) Att: 18,562

Wednesday, March 13

Blackburn 2 (Duff 20, Cole 43)
Ipswich 1 (Stewart 55) Att: 23,305

Chelsea 4 (Hasselbaink 23, 69, 81, Lampard 90)
Tottenham 0 Att: 39,652

Saturday, March 16

Bolton 1 (Gardner 46)
Derby 3 (Christie 22, Ravanelli 53, Higginbotham pen 86) Att: 25,893

Chelsea 4 (Gallas 24, Gudjohnsen 73, Forssell 85, Dalla Bona 90)
Sunderland 0 Att: 40,218

Everton 2 (Unsworth 1, Ferguson 12)
Fulham 1 (Malbranque 52) Att: 34,639

Middlesbrough 1 (Southgate 89)
Liverpool 2 (Heskey 33, Riise 84) Att: 31,253

Newcastle 2 (Robert 60, Shearer 87)
Ipswich 2 (M Bent 50, 63) Att: 51,115

Southampton 2 (Pahars 28, pen 86)
Leicester 2 (Deane 21, 23) Att: 30,012

West Ham 3 (Lomas 7, Kanoute 19, Defoe 78)
Man Utd 5 (Beckham 16, pen 88, Butt 21, Scholes 54, Solskjaer 63) Att: 35,281

Sunday, March 17

Aston Villa 1 (Dublin 69)
Arsenal 2 (Edu 15, Pires 61) Att: 41,520

Leeds 3 (Fowler 5, 8, Kewell 71)
Blackburn 1 (Jansen 49) Att: 39,857

Monday, March 18

Tottenham 0
Charlton 1 (Powell 70) Att: 29,602

Saturday, March 23

Charlton 1 (Johansson 61)
Bolton 2 (Djorkaeff 15, 39) Att: 26,358

Derby 3 (Strupar 57, 81, Morris 76)
Everton 4 (Unsworth 38, Stubbs 52, Alexandersson 54, Ferguson 71) Att: 33,297

Ipswich 0
Aston Villa 0 Att: 25,247

Leicester 0
Leeds 2 (Viduka 18, Fowler 31) Att: 18,976

Man Utd 0
Middlesbrough 1 (Boksic 9) Att: 67,683

Sunderland 1 (McAteer 62)
Southampton 1 (Telfer 88) Att: 46,120

Sunday, March 24

Fulham 0
Tottenham 2 (Sheringham 28, Poyet 32) Att: 15,885

Liverpool 1 (Smicer 90)
Chelsea 0 Att: 44,203

Friday, March 29

Newcastle 6 (Shearer 13, Cort 15, O'Brien 59, Solano 71, 73, Bernard 88)
Everton 2 (Ferguson 6, Alexandersson 34) Att: 51,921

Saturday, March 30

Arsenal 3 (Vieira 2, Bergkamp 4, Wiltord 30)
Sunderland 0 Att: 38,047

Bolton 3 (Delaney og 8, Bobic 41, Nolan 76)
Aston Villa 2 (Warhurst og 15, Taylor 17) Att: 24,600

Chelsea 2 (Terry 50, Petit 86)
Derby 1 (Strupar 60) Att: 37,849

Leeds 3 (Viduka 20, Harte 62, Bowyer 80)
Man Utd 4 (Scholes 9, Solskjaer 37, 39, Giggs 55) Att: 40,058

Leicester 2 (Dickov 9, 77)
Blackburn 1 (Hughes 47) Att: 16,236

Liverpool 2 (Smicer 23, Owen 36)
Charlton 0 Att: 44,094

Middlesbrough 1 (Queudrue 69)
Tottenham 1 (Iversen 32) Att: 31,285

Southampton 1 (Delap 22)
Fulham 1 (Marlet 7) Att: 31,616

West Ham 3 (Lomas 36, Di Canio 74, Defoe 86)
Ipswich 1 (M Bent 71) Att: 33,871

Monday, April 1

Blackburn 2 (Duff 27, Yordi 29)
Southampton 0 Att: 28,851

Charlton 0
Arsenal 3 (Henry 16, 25, Ljungberg 21) Att: 26,339

Derby 0
Middlesbrough 1 (Mustoe 12) Att: 30,822

Everton 3 (Pistone 41, Radzinski 57, Chadwick 86)
Bolton 1 (N'Gotty 75) Att: 39,784

Fulham 0
West Ham 1 (Kanoute 45) Att: 19,416

Ipswich 0
Chelsea 0 Att: 28,053

Sunderland 2 (Reyna 3, 18)
Leicester 1 (Dickov 9) Att: 44,950

Tottenham 2 (Iversen 10, Sheringham 29)
Leeds 1 (Viduka 52) Att: 35,167

Tuesday, April 2

Aston Villa 1 (Crouch 26)
Newcastle 1 (Shearer 3) Att: 36,597

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	32	20	9	3	66	32	69
Liverpool	33	20	8	5	55	26	68
Man Utd	33	21	4	8	82	44	67
Newcastle	32	18	6	8	61	43	60
Chelsea	33	15	12	6	60	32	57
Leeds	33	14	12	7	48	36	54
Tottenham	33	13	6	14	44	47	45
Aston Villa	33	10	13	10	38	40	43
West Ham	32	12	7	13	39	50	43
Middlesbrough	33	11	9	13	32	39	42
Charlton	33	10	11	12	35	41	41
Everton	33	10	9	14	38	46	39
Southampton	33	10	8	15	39	49	38
Sunderland	33	10	8	15	26	42	38
Fulham	33	8	12	13	31	40	36
Bolton	33	8	12	13	38	53	36
Blackburn	32	9	8	15	42	43	35
Ipswich	33	8	9	16	39	52	33
Derby	33	8	5	20	30	54	29
Leicester	33	4	10	19	24	58	22

LEADING GOALSCORERS

22 Thierry Henry (Arsenal)
21 Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink (Chelsea)
21 Ruud Van Nistelrooy (Man Utd)
18 Alan Shearer (Newcastle)
15 Robbie Fowler (Liverpool/Leeds)
15 Michael Owen (Liverpool)
15 Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (Man Utd)
13 Eidur Gudjohnsen (Chelsea)
13 Marian Pahars (Southampton)

FA CUP – quarter-final replay

Mar 23: Arsenal 3 Newcastle 0.

FRANCE

Sunday, March 10

Auxerre 0
Bordeaux 1 (Afanou 90) Att: 10,000

Saturday, March 16

Auxerre 3 (Boumsong 62, Mexes 79, Fadiga pen 83)
Metz 2 (Meyrieu pen 30, Job 63) Att: 9,000

Lille 2 (Bruno Cheyrou 2, Brunel 75)
Lyon 0 Att: 19,139

Lorient 0
Bastia 0 Att: 10,980

Monaco 1 (Carole 18)
Nantes 2 (Andre 24, Berson 48) Att: 6,000

Montpellier 0
Sedan 0 Att: 9,442

Paris SG 3 (Aloisio 55, Ronaldinho 62, 73)
Troyes 1 (Svensson 15) Att: 38,914

Rennes 2 (Arribage 60, Piquionne 72)
Marseille 0 Att: 22,656

Sochaux 1 (Crucet 28)
Guingamp 0 Att: 14,610

Sunday, March 17

Bordeaux 2 (Pauleta pen 59, Paulo Miranda 85)
Lens 1 (Pedron 86) Att: 28,170

Saturday, March 23

Bastia 3 (Manso 19, Vairelles pen 24, Jau 89)
Montpellier 0 Att: 7,704

Guingamp 0
Paris SG 1 (Fiorese 18) Att: 16,400

Lille 2 (Bakari 41, Bruno Cheyrou 77)
Auxerre 3 (Bakari og 16, Cisse 42, Mathis 90) Att: 19,468

Lyon 2 (Anderson 78, Luyindula 90)
Lorient 0 Att: 30,000

Metz 2 (Bastien 45, Baticle 58)
Sochaux 0 Att: 15,679

Nantes 3 (Fabbri 12, Andre 36, Vahirua 70)
Rennes 1 (Makhtar N'Diaye 30) Att: 35,500

Sedan 1 (N'Diefi 14)
Lens 1 (Coly 83) Att: 22,008

Troyes 2 (Gousse 89, 90)
Bordeaux 0 Att: 14,754

Sunday, March 24

Marseille 1 (Alfonso 90)
Monaco 1 (Nonda 73) Att: 45,000

Monday, April 1

Marseille 3 (Leboeuf pen 7, Sakho 73, Bakayoko 85)
Auxerre 0 Att: 49,000

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lens	30	17	9	4	49	23	60
Lyon	30	17	5	8	57	31	56
Paris SG	30	14	12	4	40	21	54
Auxerre	29	15	9	5	40	30	54
Lille	30	14	9	7	37	27	51
Bordeaux	30	13	8	9	30	25	47
Troyes	30	12	6	12	37	34	42
Sochaux	30	10	9	11	35	38	39
Marseille	30	9	10	11	30	34	37
Monaco	30	9	9	12	32	34	36
Nantes	30	10	6	14	30	36	36
Bastia	30	10	5	15	32	38	35
Sedan	28	7	12	9	28	30	33
Montpellier	30	7	12	11	23	29	33
Rennes	30	8	8	14	31	46	32
Guingamp	30	7	8	15	29	50	29
Metz	29	8	4	17	23	38	28
Lorient	30	7	7	16	39	58	28

LEADING GOALSCORERS

21 Pauleta (Bordeaux)
17 Jean-Claude Darcheville (Lorient)
16 Djibril Cisse (Auxerre)
14 Nicolas Gousse (Troyes)
13 Sonny Anderson (Lyon)
13 Shabani Nonda (Monaco)
12 Pierre-Alain Frau (Sochaux)

FRENCH CUP – semi-finals

Mar 30: Bastia 1 Sedan 0 (aet).
Mar 31: Lorient 1 Nimes 0.

GERMANY

Saturday, March 9

Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Ze Roberto 12, Berbatov 90)
Energie Cottbus 0 Att: 22,500

Bayern Munich 2 (Paulo Sergio 73, Fink 90)
1860 Munich 1 (Stranzl 75) Att: 69,000

Borussia Dortmund 3 (Nielsen og 10, Amoroso pen 63, Koller 77)
Borussia MG 1 (Dede og 48) Att: 65,000

Hansa Rostock 2 (Arvidsson 37, Lantz 73)
Kaiserslautern 1 (Klose 72) Att: 15,000

Nurnberg 0
Werder Bremen 4 (Frings 5, Ailton 20, 30, Stalteri 51) Att: 22,000

St Pauli 1 (Patschinski 57)
Freiburg 0 Att: 20,000

Wolfsburg 5 (Klimowicz 5, 19, Rau 8, Petrov 61, Karhan 77)
Koln 1 (Kreuz 45) Att: 12,000

Sunday, March 10

Hertha 6 (Preetz 40, Goor 44, 62, 85, 90, Marcelinho 54)
Hamburg 0 Att: 36,238

Schalke 2 (Waldoch 60, Sand 90)
Stuttgart 1 (Adhemar 78) Att: 60,683

Saturday, March 16

Borussia MG 1 (Sanneh og 29)
Nurnberg 0 Att: 30,000

Energie Cottbus 4 (Franklin 19, Topic 29, 35, Helbig 85)
St Pauli 0 Att: 13,500

Hamburg 1 (Barbarez 66)
Wolfsburg 1 (Klimowicz 45) Att: 37,000

Kaiserslautern 0
Bayern Munich 0 Att: 40,600

Koln 4 (Lottner 46, Kurth 52, Springer 76, Scherz 90)
Hansa Rostock 2 (Arvidsson 6, 32) Att: 15,000

Stuttgart 0
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Brdaric 40, Berbatov 45) Att: 35,000

Werder Bremen 0
Hertha 3 (Lapaczinski 62, Alves 66, 85) Att: 32,000

Sunday, March 17

Freiburg 1 (Kobiashvili 9)
Borussia Dortmund 5 (Evanilson 15, Dede 65, Amoroso 66, Koller 69, 70) Att: 25,000

1860 Munich 1 (Agostino 80)
Schalke 2 (Asamoah 3, Sand 83) Att: 25,000

Saturday, March 23

Bayer Leverkusen 4 (Sebescen 45, Kirsten 49, 81, Basturk 61)
1860 Munich 0 Att: 22,500

Bayern Munich 3 (Elber 64, 88, Salihamidzic pen 83)
Koln 0 Att: 44,000

Freiburg 0
Borussia MG 1 (Van Lent 79) Att: 25,000

Hansa Rostock 1 (Jakobsson 50)
Hamburg 1 (Barbarez 65) Att: 20,200

Hertha 2 (Alves 2, 32)
Nurnberg 0 Att: 37,163

Schalke 3 (Wilmots 45, Moller 59, Agali 81)
Kaiserslautern 0 Att: 60,683

St Pauli 1 (Cenci 83)
Stuttgart 2 (Balakov 75, Dundee 81) Att: 20,629

Sunday, March 24

Borussia Dortmund 3 (Ewerthon 28, Rosicky 35, Reina 81)
Energie Cottbus 0 Att: 62,000

Wolfsburg 2 (Klimowicz 65, Petrov 78)
Werder Bremen 0 Att: 15,000

Saturday, March 30

Borussia MG 3 (Ulich 4, Aidoo 57, 67)
Hertha 1 (Marcelinho 33) Att: 32,200

Energie Cottbus 2 (Miriuta pen 37, Helbig 68)
Freiburg 0 Att: 18,120

Hamburg 0
Bayern Munich 0 Att: 55,360

Kaiserslautern 2 (Ramzy 45, Lokvenc 55)
Bayer Leverkusen 4 (Kirsten 1, Neuville 16, Ballack pen 77, Berbatov 86) Att: 39,578

1860 Munich 4 (Weissenberger 44, Max 64, 66, 76)
St Pauli 2 (Rahn 39, Patschinski 55) Att: 23,600

Nurnberg 3 (Rink 14, Krzynowek 74, Gomis 86)
Wolfsburg 0 Att: 23,600

Stuttgart 3 (Dundee 33, Meissner 37, Ganea 64)
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Worns 52, Koller 79) Att: 44,500

Sunday, March 31

Koln 1 (Lottner 61)
Schalke 1 (Sand 40) Att: 30,000

Werder Bremen 4 (Ailton 3, Frings 47, Rost 89, Ailton pen 90)
Hansa Rostock 3 (Rydlewicz pen 24, Di Salvo 30, Schroder 49) Att: 26,000

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
B Leverkusen	29	19	5	5	71	33	62
B Dortmund	29	17	7	5	52	26	58
Bayern Munich	29	16	7	6	54	20	55
Schalke	29	16	7	6	47	28	55
Hertha	29	15	7	7	54	32	52
Kaiserslautern	29	15	4	10	52	45	49
Werder Bremen	29	14	4	11	43	36	46
1860 Munich	29	13	3	13	45	49	42
Stuttgart	29	11	8	10	36	35	41
Wolfsburg	29	10	7	12	48	44	37
Hamburg	29	9	9	11	40	46	36
Borussia MG	29	9	9	11	33	41	36
Energie Cottbus	29	9	5	15	30	49	32
Hansa Rostock	29	8	6	15	31	45	30
Nurnberg	29	8	4	17	28	50	28
Freiburg	29	5	9	15	28	51	24
St Pauli	29	4	9	16	31	57	21
Koln	29	4	8	17	18	54	20

LEADING GOALSCORERS

15 Marcio Amoroso (Borussia Dortmund)
15 Michael Ballack (Bayer Leverkusen)
14 Giovane Elber (Bayern Munich)
14 Martin Max (1860 Munich)
13 Ailton (Werder Bremen)
13 Marcelinho (Hertha)
12 Miroslav Klose (Kaiserslautern)
12 Oliver Neuville (Bayer Leverkusen)
12 Claudio Pizarro (Bayern Munich)

GREECE

Mar 9: Aris 0 Panathinaikos 0.
Mar 10: Panionios 2 Ionikos 2; Panahaiki 1 Akratitos 1; Aigaleo 2 PAOK 1; AEK 3 OFI 0; Xanthi 1 Olympiakos 2; Ethnikos A 1 Iraklis 2.
Mar 16: Panathinaikos 2 Iraklis 1; Panahaiki 1 Panionios 1.
Mar 17: Ionikos 1 Aigaleo 1; Akratitos 0 AEK 1; PAOK 1 Xanthi 0; OFI 1 Aris 2; Olympiakos 6 Ethnikos A 0.
Mar 23: Ethnikos A 1 PAOK 3; AEK 4 Panahaiki 1.
Mar 24: Panionios 0 Aigaleo 0; Xanthi 1 Ionikos 0; Aris 0 Akratitos 1; Iraklis 1 OFI 1; Panathinaikos 1 Olympiakos 1.
Mar 30: Aigaleo 1 Xanthi 0.
Mar 31: AEK 2 Panionios 1; Panahaiki 1 Aris 0; Ionikos 1 Ethnikos A 0; Akratitos 3 Iraklis 0; PAOK 2 Panathinaikos 2; Olympiakos 3 OFI 0.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AEK	22	16	1	5	50	22	49
Olympiakos	22	14	6	2	55	23	48
Panathinaikos	22	12	7	3	39	19	43
PAOK	22	12	6	4	43	30	42
Xanthi	22	10	6	6	30	20	36
Iraklis	22	7	8	7	26	30	29
Aris	22	7	7	8	22	23	28
Panionios	22	6	9	7	29	31	27
OFI	22	7	6	9	24	29	27
Aigaleo	22	6	5	11	23	38	23
Akratitos	22	5	4	13	21	31	19
Ionikos	22	4	7	11	16	37	19
Panahaiki	22	2	9	11	21	46	15
Ethnikos A	22	3	5	14	17	37	14

HOLLAND

Friday, March 8

Utrecht 4 (Kuijt 22, Marilia og 45, Gluscevic 65, Nieuwenburg og 79)
Sparta 2 (Vreven og 23, Langerak 58) Att: 13,000

Saturday, March 9

Den Bosch 1 (Van der Hoorn 81)
NAC 2 (Schenning 38, Stewart 62) Att: 5,060

Fortuna 0
Groningen 1 (Hoogstrate 28) Att: 5,000

Heerenveen 2 (Selakovic 48, Lurling 57)
RKC 0 Att: 14,300

PSV 4 (Kezman 18, Vennegoor of Hesselink 28, 39, Rommedahl 45)
Roda JC 1 (Sonko 62) Att: 31,000

Vitesse 2 (Stefanovic 76, Claessens 90)
Twente 0 Att: 25,250

Sunday, March 10

Ajax 4 (Pienaar 30, Bakens og 46, Hossam 68, Wamberto 90)
De Graafschap 0 Att: 36,282

Feyenoord 4 (Van Hooijdonk 17, 57, Ono 31, Tomasson 39)
AZ 1 (Ketting 63) Att: 42,000

NEC 3 (De Nooijer 31, Jansen 34, Hesp 58)
Willem II 0 Att: 10,000

Wednesday, March 13

Heerenveen 3 (Edman 7, Hakansson 68, 69)
Fortuna 1 (Cramb pen 45) Att: 14,300

NEC 3 (De Nooijer 85, Koning 89, Latuheru 90)
De Graafschap 1 (Van der Haar 30) Att: 10,500

Friday, March 15

Roda JC 1 (Anastasiou 38)
NAC 1 (Salmon 9) Att: 14,000

Saturday, March 16

AZ 2 (Nelisse 27, Huiberts 90)
De Graafschap 1 (Van der Haar 38) Att: 6,637

Willem II 4 (Landzaat 2, pen 16, pen 45, Bombarda 7)
Sparta 0 Att: 13,400

Sunday, March 17

Ajax 2 (Hossam 35, 68)
Heerenveen 0 Att: 41,937

Feyenoord 3 (Van Hooijdonk 67, pen 90, Kalou 82)
Den Bosch 0 Att: 37,500

RKC 2 (Janssen 27, De Graef 89)
NEC 1 (De Nooijer 56) Att: 6,000

Twente 0
Groningen 1 (Johansson pen 82) Att: 13,000

Utrecht 3 (Zwaanswijk 45, Gluscevic 68, 87)
Fortuna 0 Att: 13,000

Vitesse 0
PSV 0 Att: 26,000

Friday, March 22

Fortuna 0
AZ 1 (Van Galen 21) Att: 3,800

Saturday, March 23

Den Bosch 1 (De Freitas 27)
Willem II 2 (Shoukov 52, Bombarda 85) Att: 5,347

Heerenveen 4 (Allback 11, Jensen 27, Nurmela 37, Selakovic 88)
NEC 0 Att: 14,300

NAC 3 (Gudelj 12, Salmon 52, Feher pen 68)
Vitesse 3 (Hofs 59, 78, Amoah 64) Att: 14,414

Sunday, March 24

De Graafschap 0
Utrecht 0 Att: 11,000

Groningen 0
Roda JC 2 (Berglund 81, 90) Att: 12,487

PSV 1 (Ooijer 35)
Ajax 1 (Galasek 24) Att: 33,000

RKC 3 (Cornelisse 30, Van Diemen 75, Janssen 83)
Twente 1 (Van de Paar 2) Att: 6,250

Sparta 0
Feyenoord 5 (Emerton 6, Tomasson 17, Van Hooijdonk 45, Leonardo 49, Bosvelt 63) Att: 10,570

Saturday, March 30

AZ 0
Twente 2 (Cairo 6, Heubach 70) Att: 6,867

NAC 1 (Peto 57)
De Graafschap 0 Att: 15,045

NEC 3 (Demouge 26, Wielaert 74, Tumba 90)
Fortuna 1 (Hamming 12) Att: 9,500

Roda JC 3 (Kros og 4, Vicelich 32, Van Dessel 82)
Sparta 0 Att: 14,500

Sunday, March 31

Feyenoord 1 (Van Hooijdonk 82)
RKC 1 (Fuchs 48) Att: 42,000

Vitesse 3 (Van Beukering 73, Knol 75, Bergdolmo og 85)
Ajax 1 (Bergdolmo pen 31) Att: 27,500

Monday, April 1

PSV 4 (Hofland pen 13, Ramzi 25, Rommedahl 48, 52)
Heerenveen 1 (Hakansson 77) Att: 33,000

Utrecht 3 (Vreven 50, Roiha 53, Jochemsen 80)
Den Bosch 1 (Van den Eede pen 78) Att: 13,500

Wednesday, April 3

Ajax 4 (Mido 44, 56, Machlas 71, 86)
Groningen 3 (Van Gessel 13, Robben 59, Tuhuteru 69) Att: 30,142

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ajax	30	18	7	5	64	34	61
Feyenoord	28	17	5	6	63	23	56
PSV	28	16	6	6	62	29	54
Heerenveen	28	15	6	7	51	23	51
Vitesse	29	13	11	5	37	29	50
NAC	29	14	7	8	50	44	49
Utrecht	29	12	8	9	55	45	44
RKC	29	12	6	11	40	35	42
NEC	29	11	5	13	31	48	38
Willem II	28	9	10	9	45	47	37
AZ	29	10	5	14	33	40	35
Roda JC	29	10	5	14	31	42	35
Twente	29	8	10	11	36	38	34
Groningen	29	9	5	15	36	54	32
Den Bosch	29	7	9	13	36	48	30
De Graafschap	28	8	5	15	34	46	29
Sparta	29	4	11	14	26	65	23
Fortuna	29	2	7	20	23	63	13

LEADING GOALSCORERS

23 Pierre Van Hooijdonk (Feyenoord)
20 Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink (PSV)
17 Jon Dahl Tomasson (Feyenoord)
15 Denny Landzaat (Willem II)
14 Rafael Van der Vaart (Ajax)
13 Marcus Allback (Heerenveen)
13 Bart Van den Eede (Den Bosch)
12 Igor Gluscevic (Utrecht)

DUTCH CUP – semi-finals

Mar 29: Ajax 2 (reserves) 2 Utrecht 2 (aet; Utrecht 7-6 on pens).

Still to play: Ajax v PSV

HUNGARY

Mar 8: Kispest-Honved 0 Ferencvaros 4.
Mar 9: Zalaegerszeg 2 Vasas 2; MTK 2 Gyor 1; Debrecen 0 Videoton 0.
Mar 10: Matav 2 Dunaferr 0; Ujpest 2 Haladas 1.
Mar 15: Gyor 1 Zalaegerszeg 3.
Mar 16: Vasas 3 Kispest-Honved 3; Haladas 1 Matav 1; Debrecen 4 MTK 3; Dunaferr 3 Videoton 1; Ferencvaros 2 Ujpest 0.
Mar 22: Videoton 2 Haladas 2.
Mar 23: Dunaferr 0 Debrecen 0; Matav 2 Ferencvaros 1; Ujpest 2 Vasas 2; Kispest-Honved 1 Gyor 4; Zalaegerszeg 2 MTK 0.
Mar 29: Haladas 3 Dunaferr 1; Gyor 3 Ujpest 2.
Mar 30: Vasas 2 Matav 2; Ferencvaros 4 Videoton 1; MTK 0 Kispest-Honved 0; Debrecen 1 Zalaegerszeg 6.

HUNGARY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
MTK	27	18	4	5	51	22	58
Zalaegerszeg	27	16	5	6	57	32	53
Ferencvaros	27	14	4	9	47	33	46
Dunaferr	27	11	8	8	48	31	41
Videoton	27	10	9	8	33	35	39
Ujpest	27	10	6	11	47	49	36
Matav	27	8	8	11	40	46	32
Gyor	27	7	9	11	38	47	30
Debrecen	27	6	12	9	32	42	30
Kispest-Honved	27	7	7	13	36	55	28
Haladas	27	6	9	12	33	52	27
Vasas	27	5	7	15	35	53	22

ITALY

Saturday, March 9

Inter 2 (Seedorf 6, 90)
Juventus 2 (Trezeguet 13, Tudor 82) Att: 79,188

Sunday, March 10

Atalanta 2 (Rossini 24, Pinardi 30)
Lecce 1 (Cirillo 56) Att: 15,543

Bologna 2 (Fresi 3, Cruz 24)
Milan 0 Att: 31,754

Fiorentina 0
Udinese 0 Att: 21,639

Lazio 1 (Stankovic 54)
Roma 5 (Montella 13, 30, 37, 64, Totti 72) Att: 72,454

Piacenza 2 (Di Francesco 31, Hubner 85)
Perugia 0 Att: 6,568

Torino 2 (Ferrante 35, Maspero 60)
Chievo 2 (Corradi 20, 53) Att: 16,186

Venezia 1 (Magallanes 41)
Brescia 2 (Giunti pen 55, Salgado 58) Att: 7,534

Verona 1 (Mutu pen 83)
Parma 0 Att: 15,602

Wednesday, March 13

Parma 0
Chievo 0 Att: 18,000

Saturday, March 16

Roma 3 (Montella 18, 68, Carrera og 29)
Atalanta 1 (Doni 84) Att: 56,000

Sunday, March 17

Brescia 1 (Yllana pen 90)
Lazio 1 (Crespo 56) Att: 14,064

Chievo 1 (Corini pen 63)
Venezia 1 (Corini og 6) Att: 6,948

Fiorentina 1 (Gonzalez 45)
Bologna 1 (Cruz 61) Att: 17,245

Juventus 1 (Nedved 39)
Verona 0 Att: 38,231

Lecce 1 (Vugrinec 90)
Inter 2 (Recoba 40, 68) Att: 29,738

Milan 2 (Kaladze 51, Ambrosini 79)
Torino 1 (Ferrante pen 64) Att: 51,520

Perugia 2 (Vryzas 8, Bazzani 29)
Parma 1 (Bonazzoli 65) Att: 8,189

Udinese 1 (Muzzi 88)
Piacenza 1 (Gautieri 35) Att: 13,663

Saturday, March 23

Parma 1 (Lamouchi 88)
Juventus 0 Att: 25,297

Sunday, March 24

Bologna 4 (Pecchia 13, Cruz 66, Signori 72, Fresi 82)
Lecce 3 (Popescu 18, 37, Chevanton 68) Att: 22,146

Brescia 3 (Toni 10, 29, 45)
Perugia 0 Att: 14,764

Chievo 2 (Cossato 42, 74)
Verona 1 (Mutu 13) Att: 35,708

Inter 3 (Recoba 2, 72, Vieri 44)
Roma 1 (Totti 57) Att: 78,209

Lazio 2 (Stankovic 38, Fiore 79)
Udinese 0 Att: 38,911

Piacenza 0
Milan 1 (Serginho pen 21) Att: 12,100

Torino 1 (Scarchilli 28)
Fiorentina 0 Att: 15,524

Venezia 0
Atalanta 1 (Rossini 85) Att: 8,449

Saturday, March 30

Atalanta 1 (Comandini 45)
Piacenza 1 (Cardone 71) Att: 15,644

Fiorentina 0
Inter 1 (Vieri 62) Att: 26,293

Juventus 1 (Trezeguet 38)
Lazio 1 (Claudio Lopez 25) Att: 40,075

Lecce 2 (Giacomazzi 6, Chevanton 63)
Venezia 1 (Balleello 57) Att: 11,676

Milan 3 (Inzaghi 53, 90, Pirlo 78)
Parma 1 (Di Vaio 14) Att: 54,222

Perugia 2 (Bazzani 35, Milanese 68)
Chievo 2 (Corradi 22, 50) Att: 13,067

Roma 3 (Montella 33, Emerson 42, 52)
Bologna 1 (Cruz 82) Att: 59,408

Udinese 3 (Marcos Paulo 8, Sosa 13, 47)
Brescia 2 (Bachini 16, Guardiola 90) Att: 16,526

Verona 0
Torino 1 (Franco 27) Att: 14,532

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter	29	18	8	3	52	25	62
Roma	29	16	11	2	47	21	59
Juventus	29	15	11	3	51	23	56
Bologna	29	14	6	9	36	33	48
Milan	29	12	11	6	41	30	47
Chievo	29	12	10	7	49	41	46
Lazio	29	10	11	8	39	29	41
Torino	29	10	9	10	33	34	39
Perugia	29	10	7	12	32	40	37
Atalanta	29	10	7	12	34	44	37
Verona	29	10	5	14	35	43	35
Parma	29	9	7	13	35	41	34
Udinese	29	9	7	13	38	46	34
Piacenza	29	8	9	12	40	38	33
Brescia	29	7	12	10	36	45	33
Lecce	29	6	9	14	32	46	27
Fiorentina	29	5	7	17	28	52	22
Venezia	29	3	7	19	26	53	16

LEADING GOALSCORERS
21 Dario Hubner (Piacenza)
20 Christian Vieri (Inter)
19 David Trezeguet (Juventus)
17 Marco Di Vaio (Parma)
16 Cristiano Doni (Atalanta)
15 Filippo Maniero (Venezia)
14 Roberto Muzzi (Udinese)
13 Andrii Shevchenko (Milan)

POLAND

CHAMPIONSHIP POOL

Mar 8: Pogon 2 Legia 2.
Mar 9: Polonia 4 Wisla 2; Ruch Chorzow 0 Odra 1; Amica 4 Katowice 0.
Mar 15: Legia 1 Wisla 0.
Mar 16: Pogon 2 Polonia 0; Katowice 2 Odra 1; Amica 2 Ruch Chorzow 0.
Mar 19: Polonia 1 Amica 0; Wisla 1 Katowice 1.
Mar 20: Odra 0 Legia 1; Ruch Chorzow 0 Pogon 0.
Mar 22: Amica 2 Wisla 1.
Mar 23: Legia 2 Ruch Chorzow 1; Pogon 2 Odra 1; Katowice 0 Polonia 0.
Mar 30: Polonia 0 Ruch Chorzow 0; Wisla 1 Odra 1; Katowice 3 Legia 3; Amica 1 Pogon 0.

POLAND – CHAMPIONSHIP POOL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Legia	8	5	3	0	13	8	32 [14]
Amica	8	5	1	2	13	6	28 [12]
Wisla	8	3	2	3	11	10	25 [14]
Polonia	8	3	3	2	8	7	25 [13]
Pogon	8	2	3	3	6	6	21 [12]
Katowice	8	3	3	2	9	11	21 [9]
Odra	8	1	1	6	5	13	20 [16]
Ruch Chorzow	8	1	2	5	6	10	15 [10]

Teams carried forward half their points (figure in brackets) from regular season

PORTUGAL

Friday, March 8

Belenenses 3 (Verona 21, Cesar Peixoto 74, Cafu 88)
FC Porto 0

Saturday, March 9

Gil Vicente 0
Benfica 2 (Argel 3, Drulovic 20)

Sporting Braga 0
Boavista 2 (Duda 26, Artur Jorge og 70)

Sunday, March 10

Alverca 2 (Quinzinho 76, Vargas 77)
Beira Mar 0

Farense 1 (Patrick 27)
Varzim 1 (Prokopenko 34)

Pacos Ferreira 6 (Leonardo 13, Mauro 41, Mario Sergio 52, Pedrinha pen 73, Ze Manuel 75, Carlos Carneiro 85)
Salgueiros 0

Santa Clara 0
Sporting Lisbon 3 (Jardel pen 72, Pedro Barbosa 78, Paulo Bento 89)

Uniao Leiria 0
Setubal 0

Monday, March 11

Guimaraes 1 (Cleber 24)
Maritimo 3 (Eric Gaucho 34, Dinda 76, Kenedy 86)

Thursday, March 14

Salgueiros 1 (Edu Brasil 61)
Belenenses 2 (Cesar Peixoto 24, Cafu 31)

Saturday, March 16

Beira Mar 2 (Demetrios 71, pen 73)
Uniao Leiria 1 (Maciel 50)

Boavista 2 (Serginho 9, Alexandre 89)
Santa Clara 0

Maritimo 4 (Eric Gaucho pen 22, 46, Dinda 36, Richardson 89)
Sporting Braga 1 (Ze Roberto 61)

FC Porto 0
Alverca 0

Setubal 3 (Marco Ferreira 56, 59, 67)
Gil Vicente 2 (Manoel 2, Ivo 39)

Sporting Lisbon 3 (Jardel 14, 48, Hugo Viana 73)
Pacos Ferreira 0

Varzim 0
Guimaraes 0

Monday, March 18

Benfica 5 (Simao 18, 89, Tiago 49, Miguel 52, Drulovic 76)
Farense 0

Saturday, March 23

Gil Vicente 2 (Carlos pen 72, Paulo Alves 87)
Beira Mar 1 (Filipe 26)

Guimaraes 1 (Fangueiro 48)
Benfica 4 (Miguel 34, 89, Simao pen 70, Zahovic 77)

Sporting Lisbon 2 (Joao Pinto 19, Quiroga 66)
Salgueiros 0

Sunday, March 24

Farense 2 (Hassan Nader 14, Carlos Costa 51)
Setubal 2 (Hugo Henrique 45, pen 57)

Pacos Ferreira 0
Boavista 1 (Marcio Santos 14)

Santa Clara 0
Maritimo 0

Sporting Braga 2 (Riva 25, Barroso 65)
Varzim 0

Uniao Leiria 1 (Maciel 48)
FC Porto 1 (Helder Postiga 15)

Monday, March 25

Alverca 0
Belenenses 1 (Rui Duarte 48)

Saturday, March 30

Beira Mar 2 (Fary 29, Rui Dolores 39)
Farense 1 (Djurdjevic 54)

Benfica 1 (Zahovic 73)
Sporting Braga 1 (Abiodun 53)

Boavista 0
Sporting Lisbon 0

Maritimo 0
Pacos Ferreira 1 (Leonardo 38)

FC Porto 2 (Candido Costa 67, Helder Postiga 84)
Gil Vicente 1 (Ricardo Fernandes 48)

Salgueiros 2 (Joao Pedro 29, Toy 40)
Alverca 1 (Caju 20)

Setubal 1 (Marco Ferreira 67)
Guimaraes 0

Varzim 1 (Quim Berto 86)
Santa Clara 0

Monday, April 1

Belenenses 1 (Cafu 90)
Uniao Leiria 0

Wednesday, April 3

Gil Vicente 2 (Loureiro 48, Marco Nuno 72)
Alverca 2 (Vargas 5, Caju 27)

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sporting Lisbon	29	19	7	3	62	20	64
Boavista	29	19	6	4	45	14	63
Benfica	29	15	10	4	57	32	55
FC Porto	29	16	5	8	49	30	53
Belenenses	29	15	5	9	43	36	50
Maritimo	29	14	4	11	40	29	46
Uniao Leiria	29	11	9	9	41	31	42
Pacos Ferreira	29	10	9	10	37	38	39
Guimaraes	29	10	8	11	29	30	38
Sporting Braga	29	9	10	10	34	30	37
Santa Clara	29	9	8	12	25	35	35
Beira Mar	29	9	7	13	43	50	34
Setubal	29	8	9	12	33	36	33
Gil Vicente	29	7	7	15	30	48	28
Varzim	29	7	7	15	23	48	28
Salgueiros	29	7	6	16	24	60	27
Alverca	29	6	6	17	30	52	24
Farense	29	5	7	17	23	49	22

LEADING GOALSCORERS
33 Mario Jardel (Sporting Lisbon)
17 Derlei (Uniao Leiria)
15 Fary Faye (Beira Mar)

ROMANIA

Mar 9: Petrolul 1 Sportul 1; Otelul 2 National 0; Gloria 1 U Craiova 2; Arges 2 Astra 0; Brasov 0 Farul 0; Rapid 6 UM Timisoara 0; Steaua 2 Bacau 1.
Mar 10: Ceahlaul 1 Dinamo 2.
Mar 16: U Craiova 2 Steaua 0; Sportul 1 Brasov 0; UM Timisoara 0 Otelul 1; Astra 2 Petrolul 1; Bacau 2 Arges 0; Farul 1 Ceahlaul 2.
Mar 17: Dinamo 3 Rapid 2; National 2 Gloria 0.
Mar 23: Ceahlaul 2 Sportul 1; Otelul 1 Gloria 0; Petrolul 0 Bacau 1; Rapid 2 Farul 1; Steaua 0 National 0; UM Timisoara 0 Dinamo 3.
Mar 24: Arges 1 U Craiova 0; Brasov 1 Astra 0.
Mar 30: Astra 3 Ceahlaul 0; Bacau 2 Brasov 0; Gloria 2 Steaua 1; U Craiova 0 Petrolul 2; Farul 3 UM Timisoara 0; National 1 Arges 2.
Mar 31: Dinamo 2 Otelul 2; Sportul 0 Rapid 1.

ROMANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo**	19	11	6	2	44	23	39
Rapid*	19	11	3	5	34	20	35
National	19	9	7	3	31	15	34
Steaua	19	10	2	7	30	22	32
Otelul	19	8	6	5	20	13	30
U Craiova	19	8	5	6	27	23	29
Bacau	19	9	2	8	25	25	29
Farul	19	7	5	7	25	25	26
Gloria	19	8	1	10	19	25	25
Ceahlaul**	19	8	3	8	25	27	24
Arges	19	7	3	9	19	26	24
Brasov	19	6	5	8	18	20	23
Astra	19	5	6	8	20	20	21
Petrolul	19	4	5	10	18	32	17
Sportul	19	5	2	12	21	37	17
UM Timisoara	19	3	3	13	14	43	12

**1pt deducted for non-completion of fixture, reduced from 5pts on appeal*
***The Ceahlaul v Dinamo game ended 1-2, but was awarded as a 3-0 defeat against both teams because of 'lack of competitiveness'; Ceahlaul had 3pts deducted; subject to appeal*

RUSSIA

Mar 8: Lokomotiv M 1 Alaniya 0; Shinnik 1 Saturn 3; Spartak 0 Rostselmash 0; Kryliya Sovetov 1 Uralan 1.
Mar 9: Torpedo M 1 Sokol 0; Anzhi 2 Zenit 0; Rotor 0 Dinamo 0; CSKA 4 Torpedo-ZIL 0.
Mar 12: Spartak 3 Shinnik 0; Uralan 0 Lokomotiv M 0; Alaniya 1 Kryliya Sovetov 4; Saturn 2 Rostselmash 0.
Mar 13: Zenit 1 Rotor 0; Torpedo-ZIL 2 Torpedo M 1; Sokol 0 CSKA 1; Dinamo 2 Anzhi 0.
Mar 16: Shinnik 2 Alaniya 0; Rostselmash 2 Uralan 0; Lokomotiv M 2 Saturn 0; Kryliya Sovetov 0 Spartak 2.
Mar 17: Torpedo M 2 Dinamo 0; Anzhi 0 Torpedo-ZIL 0; Rotor 2 Sokol 1; CSKA 1 Zenit 0.
Mar 22: Spartak 1 Lokomotiv M 2.
Mar 23: Uralan 1 Shinnik 1; Alaniya 2 Rostselmash 1; Saturn 3 Kryliya Sovetov 1; Zenit 2 Torpedo M 2; Torpedo-ZIL 0 Rotor 2; Sokol 1 Anzhi 0; Dinamo 1 CSKA 2.
Mar 30: Lokomotiv M 2 Sokol 0; Shinnik 2 Dinamo 1; Rostselmash 1 Zenit 2; Kryliya Sovetov 0 Torpedo-ZIL 0; Rotor 1 Saturn 1; CSKA 1 Alaniya 0.
Mar 31: Anzhi 3 Spartak 3; Torpedo M 2 Uralan 2.

RUSSIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CSKA	5	5	0	0	9	1	15
Lokomotiv M	5	4	1	0	7	1	13
Saturn	5	3	1	1	9	5	10
Spartak	5	2	2	1	9	5	8
Torpedo M	5	2	2	1	8	6	8
Rotor	5	2	2	1	5	3	8
Zenit	5	2	1	2	5	6	7
Shinnik	5	2	1	2	6	8	7
Kryliya Sovetov	5	1	2	2	6	7	5
Anzhi	5	1	2	2	5	6	5
Torpedo-ZIL	5	1	2	2	2	7	5
Dinamo	5	1	1	3	4	6	4
Rostselmash	5	1	1	3	4	6	4
Uralan	5	0	4	1	4	6	4
Sokol	5	1	0	4	2	6	3
Alaniya	5	1	0	4	3	9	3

SCOTLAND

Saturday, March 9

Dundee 2 (Sara pen 14, Ketsbaia 40)
Aberdeen 3 (Darren Young 55, Anderson 74, Mackie 76) Att: 8,250

Dunfermline 2 (N'Diaye 66, Hampshire 76)
Kilmarnock 0 Att: 5,618

Hearts 1 (McKenna 80)
Dundee Utd 2 (Aljofree pen 10, Miller 34) Att: 10,893

Livingston 0
Hibernian 3 (O'Connor 15, O'Neil 45, Petersen og 78) Att: 8,120

St Johnstone 0
Motherwell 2 (McFadden pen 9, Lehmann 62) Att: 3,282

Sunday, March 10

Rangers 1 (Numan 60)
Celtic 1 (Petrov 23) Att: 49,765

Wednesday, March 13

Dundee 2 (Sara 57, 90)
Livingston 0 Att: 5,506

Saturday, March 16

Aberdeen 1 (Mike 7)
Dunfermline 0 Att: 13,764

Celtic 1 (Petrov 41)
Dundee Utd 0 Att: 58,392

Dundee 2 (Ketsbaia 5, 25)
Motherwell 0 Att: 5,785

Hibernian 1 (O'Connor 5)
Hearts 2 (Severin 40, Pressley pen 88) Att: 13,240

Kilmarnock 1 (Dargo 36)
Livingston 1 (Wilson 21) Att: 6,936

Tuesday, March 19

Motherwell 0
Celtic 4 (Lambert 10, Larsson 53, pen 61, Mjallby 78) Att: 10,314

Wednesday, March 20

Rangers 5 (McCann 24, 40, 61, Kanchelskis 34, Burke 80)
Kilmarnock 0 Att: 40,768

Saturday, March 23

Dundee Utd 1 (Thompson 77)
Hibernian 2 (Arpinon 38, O'Connor 73) Att: 5,801

Dunfermline 2 (Nicholson 33, Crawford 52)
Dundee 0 Att: 7,299

Hearts 1 (Wales 50)
St Johnstone 3 (Lovenkrands 21, 31, McBride pen 39) Att: 10,672

Livingston 0
Aberdeen 0 Att: 9,449

SCOTLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Celtic	33	29	3	1	78	15	90
Rangers	33	23	8	2	75	23	77
Aberdeen	33	15	6	12	46	43	51
Livingston	33	13	10	10	40	35	49
Dunfermline	33	12	7	14	39	52	43
Hearts	33	12	6	15	44	46	42
Kilmarnock	33	11	9	13	37	46	42
Dundee	33	10	7	16	35	50	37
Dundee Utd	33	9	8	16	32	56	35
Hibernian	33	8	10	15	43	51	34
Motherwell	33	9	6	18	42	61	33
St Johnstone	33	5	4	24	23	56	19

LEADING GOALSCORERS
26 Henrik Larsson (Celtic)
18 Tore Andre Flo (Rangers)
15 John Hartson (Celtic)

SCOTTISH CUP – semi-finals

Mar 23: Ayr 0 Celtic 3.
Mar 24: Rangers 3 Partick 0.

LEAGUE CUP – Final

Mar 17 - Hampden Park, Glasgow
Ayr 0
Rangers 4 (Flo 44, Ferguson pen 49, Caniggia 75, 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 50,076. **Ref:** Dallas

SPAIN

Saturday, March 9

Betis 2 (Dani 3, 77)
Barcelona 1 (Ito og 54) Att: 50,000

Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Pandiani 8)
Rayo Vallecano 1 (Bolic 34) Att: 34,000

Las Palmas 2 (Jorge 30, Josico 74)
Alaves 1 (Astudillo 13) Att: 16,000

Real Madrid 3 (Raul 14, Hierro pen 60, McManaman 64)
Villarreal 0 Att: 62,000

Sunday, March 10

Espanyol 2 (Ricardo 21, De Lucas 90)
Athletic Bilbao 0 Att: 22,700

Malaga 2 (Gerardo 2, Musampa 10)
Zaragoza 1 (Acuna 63) Att: 15,000

Mallorca 4 (Eto'o 6, pen 35, Nadal 78, Cichi Soler 89)
Osasuna 2 (Gancedo 43, Palacios 63) Att: 17,000

Real Sociedad 0
Tenerife 2 (Marioni 18, Fuertes pen 88) Att: 26,000

Valencia 2 (Sanchez 65, Angulo 90)
Sevilla 0 Att: 45,000

Valladolid 2 (Fernando 31, pen 69)
Celta Vigo 4 (Sergio 8, Catanha 36, 49, 74) Att: 14,700

Saturday, March 16

Barcelona 1 (Xavi 59)
Real Madrid 1 (Zidane 39) Att: 95,000

Osasuna 1 (Aloisi pen 90)
Deportivo La Coruna 3 (Diego Tristan 6, 18, pen 32) Att: 16,222

Sunday, March 17

Alaves 2 (Cruyff 5, 12)
Athletic Bilbao 3 (Tiko 43, Urzaiz 45, Larrazabal pen 74) Att: 14,400

Celta Vigo 3 (Catanha 21, Mostovoi 38, Karpin 77)
Las Palmas 2 (Orlando 56, Paqui 71) Att: 14,000

Rayo Vallecano 2 (Pellegrino og 45, Korino 57)
Valencia 1 (Angulo 28) Att: 14,000

Real Sociedad 1 (Kovacevic 18)
Espanyol 0 Att: 25,000

Sevilla 0
Malaga 2 (Dely Valdes 59, 75) Att: 30,000

Tenerife 0
Mallorca 0 Att: 20,000

Villarreal 2 (Calleja 80, Arruabarrena 86)
Valladolid 2 (Fernando pen 9, Luis Garcia 15) Att: 15,000

Zaragoza 1 (Bilic 25)
Betis 1 (Dani 69) Att: 33,000

Saturday, March 23

Betis 0
Sevilla 0 Att: 50,000

Las Palmas 3 (Jorge pen 30, Samways 31, Pablo Lago 76)
Villarreal 2 (Victor pen 3, Unai 36) Att: 17,253

Malaga 0
Rayo Vallecano 0 Att: 20,000

Sunday, March 24

Athletic Bilbao 1 (Urzaiz 40)
Celta Vigo 6 (Catanha 16, Vagner 19, Luccin 64, Karpin 70, Jesuli 76, Maurice 81) Att: 39,000

Deportivo La Coruna 3 (Scaloni 75, 81, Makaay 85)
Tenerife 1 (Lussenhoff 30) Att: 28,000

Espanyol 1 (De Lucas 44)
Alaves 2 (Astudillo 85, Ivan Alonso 89) Att: 17,100

Mallorca 0
Real Sociedad 2 (Kovacevic 48, 62) Att: 15,000

Real Madrid 3 (Hierro 15, pen 59, 79)
Zaragoza 1 (Milosevic 78) Att: 63,512

Valencia 2 (Sanchez 77, Baraja 90)
Osasuna 1 (Aloisi 84) Att: 40,000

Valladolid 1 (Luis Garcia 8)
Barcelona 2 (Kluivert 11, Cocu 40) Att: 16,300

Saturday, March 30

Barcelona 1 (Luis Enrique 19)
Las Palmas 1 (Orlando 53) Att: 45,000

Celta Vigo 3 (Vagner 53, 75, Catanha 82)
Alaves 1 (Coloccini 90) Att: 18,000

Real Sociedad 1 (Idiakez 35)
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Valeron 53) Att: 28,000

Sevilla 0
Real Madrid 1 (Ivan Helguera 23) Att: 30,000

Tenerife 0
Valencia 1 (Aimar 76) Att: 22,000

Sunday, March 31

Osasuna 0
Malaga 2 (Dely Valdes pen 49, Dario Silva 69) Att: 13,900

Mallorca 2 (Eto'o 27, Luque 64)
Espanyol 1 (Tamudo 39) Att: 7,100

Rayo Vallecano 0
Betis 0 Att: 10,850

RECENT TRANSFERS

	POS	FROM	TO
Jamie ASHDOWN	G	Reading	Arsenal (loan)
Vitaliy BALITSKYI	D	CSKA Kyiv	Alaniya Vladikavkaz
Franck BERNHARD	D	Strasbourg	Motherwell
Maksim BOKOV	D	Kuban Krasnodar	Uralan Elista
Jeff CASSAR	G	Miami Fusion	Bolton
Frederic CHASSOT	F	Zurich	Neuchatel Xamax (loan)
Daniel CHIRITA	D	Rapid Bucharest	Shakhtar Donetsk
Peter CROUCH	F	Portsmouth	Aston Villa
Dmitri DE FAUW	D	Club Brugge	Sparta Rotterdam
Georgi DONKOV	M	Koln	Neuchatel Xamax (loan)
Tresor EMPOKE	F	Excelsior Mouscron	Lierse
Alexander FILIMONOV	G	Kyiv Dynamo	Uralan
Jan Arge FJORTOFT	F	Unattached	Lillestrom
Daniel FONSECA	F	River Plate (Arg)	Nacional (Uru)
Renat GIBADULLIN	D	Kamaz Naberezhnye	Moscow Spartak
Samson GODWIN	F	GKS Katowice	Karpaty Lviv
Eric HASSLI	F	Metz	Southampton (loan)
Lars HIRSCHFELD	G	Calgary Storm	Tottenham
Evgheny HMARUC	G	Chernomorets Nov'sisk	Constructorul (loan)
Valentine IVANOV	D	Botev	Metalurh Zaporizha
Dime JANKULOVSKI	G	Vastra Frolunda	Start
Nocko JOKOVIC	F	Unattached	Livingston
Serhiy KANDAUROV	M	Unattached	Metalist Kharkiv
Azar KARADAS	F	Brann Bergen	Rosenborg
Andre KARNEBEEK	D	Twente	Dunfermline
Ivan KAVIEDES	F	FC Porto	Barcelona (Ecu)
Fredrik KJOLNER	D	Molde	Bodo/Glimt
Kostas KONSTANTINIDIS	M	Hertha Berlin	Bolton (loan)
Ognen KOROMAN	M	OFK Belgrade	Dinamo Moscow
Marek KOZMINSKI	M	Brescia	Ancona (loan)
Anders NIELSEN	F	Gent	AGF Aarhus
Predrag OCOKOJLIC	D	Radnicki	Shakhtar Donetsk
Vicente PRINCIPIANO	M	San Lorenzo	Colo Colo
Predrag RANZELOVIC	F	CSKA Moscow	Zenit St Petersburg
Giovanni RESTOR	F	FC Fortune	Excelsior Mouscron
Hamilton RICARD	F	Middlesbrough	CSKA Sofia
Oleg SABIROV	F	Dustlik	Karpaty Lviv
Carlos SEMEDO	D	Imortal	New England Revolution
Thomas SOLBERG	D	Aberdeen	Moss
Tom Kaure STAVRIK	M	Bodo/Glimt	Shanghai Shenhua
Serghey STROENCO	M	Tiligul Tiraspol	Zimbru Chisinau
Alex TACHIE-MENSAH	F	Neuchatel Xamax	St Gallen
Olivier TEBILY	D	Celtic	Birmingham
Andy TODD	D	Bradford	Hearts (loan)
Diego TUR	D	FC Copenhagen	AB
Brian VANDENBUSSCHE	G	Club Brugge	Sparta Rotterdam
Rafael WICKY	D	Atletico Madrid	Hamburg
Tomasz WIESZCZYCKI	M	OFI Crete	Groclin-Dyskobolia
Jan ZOLNA	G	Humenne	Metalurh Zaporizha

Villarreal 5 (Victor 7, Quique Alvarez 12, Jorge Lopez 18, Victor 32, Guayre 42)
Athletic Bilbao 2 (Carlos Garcia 66, Urzaiz pen 90)
Att: 11,900

Zaragoza 0
Valladolid 0 Att: 26,250

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	32	17	8	7	61	33	59
Valencia	32	16	11	5	39	25	59
Dep La Coruna	32	16	7	9	49	37	55
Celta Vigo	32	14	12	6	59	38	54
Betis	32	13	13	6	35	26	52
Barcelona	32	14	9	9	52	31	51
Athletic Bilbao	32	13	9	10	46	54	48
Malaga	32	11	12	9	37	37	45
Alaves	32	14	3	15	34	36	45
Espanyol	32	11	8	13	39	46	41
Valladolid	32	11	8	13	36	50	41
Sevilla	32	10	9	13	43	37	39
Villarreal	32	9	10	13	39	43	37
Real Sociedad	32	10	7	15	39	44	37
Mallorca	32	10	7	15	36	42	37
Las Palmas	32	9	10	13	35	41	37
Rayo Vallecano	32	8	10	14	36	47	34
Osasuna	32	8	10	14	29	43	34
Zaragoza	32	9	7	16	29	45	34
Tenerife	32	8	8	16	25	43	32

LEADING GOALSCORERS
17 Catanha (Celta Vigo)
16 Patrick Kluivert (Barcelona)
16 Fernando Morientes (Real Madrid)
15 Diego Tristan (Deportivo La Coruna)
14 Raul (Real Madrid)

SWITZERLAND

CHAMPIONSHIP POOL

Mar 9: Grasshopper 3 Zurich 0; Servette 2 St Gallen 2; Basle 2 Young Boys 0.
Mar 15: Servette 1 Grasshopper 5.
Mar 16: Zurich 1 St Gallen 0; Basle 4 Sion 0.
Mar 17: Lugano 2 Young Boys 1.
Mar 20: Sion 1 Lugano 4.
Mar 23: St Gallen 0 Lugano 0.
Mar 24: Sion 2 Servette 3; Grasshopper 1 Basle 0; Young Boys 3 Zurich 2.
Mar 30: Young Boys 1 St Gallen 0; Grasshopper 1 Sion 0; Lugano 2 Zurich 0.
Apr 1: Servette 1 Basle 2.

SWITZERLAND – CHAMPIONSHIP POOL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	
Basle	6	5	0	1	14	4	37	[22]
Grasshopper	7	4	2	1	13	5	33	[19]
Lugano	7	4	1	2	11	8	32	[19]
Young Boys	7	4	1	2	13	8	29	[16]
Servette	7	3	1	3	11	14	27	[17]
St Gallen	6	1	3	2	6	6	24	[18]
Zurich	7	2	0	5	5	12	21	[15]
Sion	7	0	0	7	4	20	17	[17]

Teams carried forward half their points (figure in brackets) from regular season

TURKEY

Mar 8: Ankaragucu 1 Diyarbakirspor 1.
Mar 9: Rizespor 1 Genclerbirligi 2; Samsunspor 0 Istanbulspor 1; Yozgatspor 2 Trabzonspor 3; Galatasaray 1 Besiktas 0.
Mar 10: Denizlispor 2 Goztepe 1; Antalyaspor 0 Fenerbahce 1; Kocaelispor 1 Bursaspor 2; Malatyaspor 1 Gaziantepspor 1.
Mar 15: Besiktas 2 Denizlispor 2.
Mar 16: Goztepe 2 Rizespor 3; Gaziantepspor 2 Istanbulspor 2; Bursaspor 3 Yozgatspor 1.
Mar 17: Diyarbakirspor 1 Kocaelispor 1; Samsunspor 2 Ankaragucu 0; Fenerbahce 2 Malatyaspor 2; Genclerbirligi 1 Antalyaspor 0.
Mar 22: Fenerbahce 4 Gaziantepspor 1.
Mar 23: Samsunspor 0 Kocaelispor 0; Yozgatspor 2 Diyarbakirspor 0; Galatasaray 2 Bursaspor 1; Denizlispor 2 Trabzonspor 1.
Mar 24: Rizespor 1 Besiktas 3; Antalyaspor 2 Goztepe 0; Malatyaspor 1 Genclerbirligi 0; Ankaragucu 4 Istanbulspor 2.
Mar 29: Besiktas 0 Antalyaspor 0.
Mar 30: Diyarbakirspor 0 Galatasaray 0; Istanbulspor 0 Kocaelispor 1; Gaziantepspor 1 Ankaragucu 1; Trabzonspor 2 Rizespor 1.
Mar 31: Goztepe 2 Malatyaspor 1; Samsunspor 0 Yozgatspor 0; Genclerbirligi 1 Fenerbahce 1; Bursaspor 3 Denizlispor 3.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Galatasaray	28	18	6	4	61	31	60
Fenerbahce	29	19	3	7	58	30	60
Besiktas	29	17	7	5	66	33	58
Ankaragucu	29	15	5	9	64	47	50
Bursaspor	29	13	5	11	44	50	44
Istanbulspor	29	11	6	12	28	31	39
Gaziantepspor	29	10	8	11	46	45	38
Trabzonspor	28	11	5	12	45	47	38
Genclerbirligi	29	10	8	11	41	46	38
Goztepe	29	10	8	11	31	45	38
Denizlispor	29	9	10	10	53	46	37
Kocaelispor	29	10	6	13	32	44	36
Diyarbakirspor	29	9	8	12	38	45	35
Malatyaspor	29	10	4	15	31	47	34
Rizespor	29	7	10	12	36	43	31
Samsunspor	29	8	7	14	25	37	31
Antalyaspor	29	6	9	14	39	57	27
Yozgatspor	29	6	7	16	40	54	25

TURKISH CUP – Final

Apr 3
Besiktas 0
Kocaelispor 4 (Cihan Haspolat 45, Lazarov 60, Kaan 60, Serdar 85)
HT: 0-1

UKRAINE

Mar 16: Poligraftekhnika 2 Metalist 0; Metalurh Z 2 Arsenal 0; Tavriya 1 Metalurh D 3; Metalurh M 3 Karpaty 1; Dnipro 2 Kryvbas 0; Dynamo 5 Zakarpattya 0; Shakhtar 4 Vorskla 0.
Mar 25: Vorskla 1 Dynamo 2; Zakarpattya 0 Poligraftekhnika 1; Kryvbas 0 Shakhtar 0; Metalurh D 2 Metalurh M 1; Metalist 2 Metalurh Z 1; Karpaty 0 Dnipro 0; Arsenal 0 Tavriya 0.
Mar 31: Dynamo 0 Kryvbas 0; Poligraftekhnika 0 Metalurh Z 1; Tavriya 2 Metalist 0; Metalurh M 1 Arsenal 2; Dnipro 2 Metalurh D 0; Shakhtar 3 Karpaty 0; Zakarpattya 2 Vorskla 0.

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dynamo	16	12	4	0	38	6	40
Shakhtar	16	12	4	0	36	8	40
Metalurh D	16	8	4	4	27	15	28
Karpaty	16	7	4	5	18	20	25
Dnipro	16	6	6	4	16	12	24
Metalurh Z	16	7	3	6	15	14	24
Metalist	16	7	2	7	20	24	23
Poligraftekhnika	16	5	5	6	14	18	20
Metalurh M	16	5	3	8	19	23	18
Arsenal	16	5	2	9	13	18	17
Tavriya	16	4	3	9	16	27	15
Kryvbas	16	3	6	7	16	28	15
Zakarpattya	16	3	3	10	17	36	12
Vorskla	16	2	3	11	8	24	9

YUGOSLAVIA

Mar 8: Obilic 2 Zemun 1.
Mar 9: Partizan 4 Mladost A 0; Sutjeska 3 Hajduk K 1; OFK 1 Zeta 1; Vojvodina 0 Zeleznik 1; Sartid 0 Cukaricki 1; Rad 0 Red Star 0; Radnicki K 1 Mladost L 0.
Mar 15: Mladost L 1 Partizan 2.
Mar 16: Rudar P 1 Obilic 0; Cukaricki 0 Vojvodina 0; Mladost A 0 Rad 0; Red Star 5 Sartid 2; Hajduk K 1 Radnicki K 0; Zeleznik 0 OFK 0; Zemun 2 Sutjeska 0; Zeta 2 Zvezdara 0.
Mar 20: Sartid 2 Rad 1; Partizan 3 Hajduk K 0; Radnicki K 1 Zemun 4; Zvezdara 3 Zeleznik 2; OFK 3 Cukaricki 0; Obilic 2 Zeta 2; Mladost L 1 Mladost A 0; Sutjeska 1 Rudar P 0; Vojvodina 0 Red Star 0.
Mar 22: Zeleznik 0 Obilic 0.
Mar 23: Zemun 1 Partizan 3; Rad 2 Vojvodina 1; Mladost A 1 Sartid 1; Rudar P 4 Radnicki K 0; Zeta 2 Sutjeska 1; Hajduk K 1 Mladost L 0; Cukaricki 3 Zvezdara 2.
Mar 26: Red Star 3 OFK 0.
Mar 29: OFK 3 Rad 1.
Mar 30: Zvezdara 0 Red Star 1; Vojvodina 0 Sartid 2; Mladost L 2 Zemun 1; Sutjeska 2 Zeleznik 1; Obilic 1 Cukaricki 0; Radnicki K 3 Zeta 1; Hajduk K 4 Mladost A 0; Partizan 3 Rudar P 0.
Apr 2: Sartid 2 OFK 0.
Apr 3: Mladost A 0 Vojvodina 1; Cukaricki 1 Sutjeska 0; Zeleznik 1 Radnicki K 0; Zeta 3 Partizan 1; Rudar P 0 Mladost L 0; Zemun 1 Hajduk K 3; Red Star 2 Obilic 1.

YUGOSLAVIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Partizan	24	17	5	2	58	22	56
Red Star	24	14	8	2	39	18	50
Obilic	24	12	5	7	41	31	41
Sartid	24	11	6	7	31	26	39
Hajduk K	24	10	5	9	29	28	35
Vojvodina	24	7	12	5	23	18	33
Zeleznik	24	9	6	9	28	29	33
Zeta	24	9	6	9	31	39	33
Mladost L	24	9	5	10	26	24	32
OFK	24	8	7	9	31	26	31
Cukaricki	24	8	7	9	26	27	31
Sutjeska	24	9	2	13	23	32	29
Rad	23	7	6	10	25	30	27
Zemun	23	7	5	11	26	31	26
Rudar P	23	6	7	10	20	22	25
Zvezdara	21	6	6	9	26	28	24
Radnicki K	24	6	5	13	21	44	23
Mladost A	24	2	9	13	17	46	15

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

1st rnd

Group 1

Mar 13 - Asuncion
Cerro Porteno (Par) 2 (Achucarro 57, Soto og 64)
Alianza Lima (Per) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Gallesio (Uru)

Mar 14 - Sao Caetano do Sul
Sao Caetano (Bra) 3 (Brandao 24, Wagner 71, 74)
Cobreloa (Chl) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Elizondo (Arg)
Sent off: Adaozinho (Sao Caetano) 86min

Mar 28 - Lima
Alianza Lima 0
Sao Caetano 3 (Wagner 22, Brandao 30, Messias 45)
HT: 0-3. **Ref:** Solorzano (Ven)

Apr 4 - Calama
Cobreloa 3 (Galaz 37, Dinamarca 54, Canobbio 90)
Cerro Porteno 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Toro (Col)

GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sao Caetano	5	4	0	1	14	3	12
Cobreloa	5	3	0	2	10	7	9
Cerro Porteno	5	2	1	2	6	6	7
Alianza Lima	5	0	1	4	0	14	1

Apr 10: Sao Caetano v Cerro Porteno
Apr 10: Alianza Lima v Cobreloa

Group 2

Mar 12 - Asuncion
12 de Octubre (Par) 1 (Monzon 75)
Gremio (Bra) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Komjetan (Uru)

Mar 19 - Asuncion
12 de Octubre 1 (Roman 21)
Cienciano (Per) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Pozo (Chl)

Apr 2 - Santa Cruz
Oriente Petrolero (Bol) 1 (Castillo 38)
12 de Octubre 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Selman (Chl)

Apr 3 - Cusco
Cienciano 2 (Zapata 49, Fernandez 79)
Gremio 1 (Mendes 62)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Cervantes (Col)

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gremio	5	3	0	2	10	7	9
12 de Octubre	5	3	0	2	5	6	9
Oriente	5	2	0	3	10	11	6
Cienciano	5	2	0	3	6	7	6

Apr 9: Gremio v 12 de Octubre
Apr 9: Cienciano v Oriente Petrolero

Group 3

Mar 12 - Montevideo
Penarol (Uru) 3 (Cedres 2, Bengoechea pen 27, Bueno 90)
El Nacional (Ecu) 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Sanchez (Arg)

Mar 12 - Buenos Aires
San Lorenzo (Arg) 5 (Acosta 1, Cuba 44, Capria 58, Estevez 73, Franco 90)
Real Potosi (Bol) 1 (Correa 35)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Aquino (Par)
Sent off: Lopez 61min, Suarez 87min (both Real Potosi)

Mar 19 - Potosi
Real Potosi 6 (Cardozo 25, Reynaldo 26, 52, 86, Pena 56, Zabala 81)
Penarol 1 (Cedres 65)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Ramos (Ecu)

Mar 19 - Quito
El Nacional 3 (Morales 14, Ordonez 69, Fernandez 80)
San Lorenzo 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Cervantes (Col)

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Penarol	5	3	0	2	9	7	9
El Nacional	5	3	0	2	8	6	9
San Lorenzo	5	2	0	3	6	6	6
Real Potosi	5	2	0	3	10	14	6

Apr 9: San Lorenzo v Penarol
Apr 9: El Nacional v Real Potosi

Group 4

Mar 12 - La Paz
Bolivar (Bol) 5 (Mercado 14, Chiorazzo 59, pen 90, Ligori 75, Ferreira 83)
Atletico Paranaense (Bra) 5 (Kleberson 22, Ilan 29, 45, Dagoberto 36, Adriano 42)
HT: 1-5. **Ref:** Moreno (Ecu)
Sent off: Ilan 54min, Adriano 70min (both Atletico)

Mar 19 - Curitiba
Atletico Paranaense 2 (Luisinho Netto 27, 72)
Olmedo (Ecu) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Martin (Arg)
Sent off: Cocito (Atletico) 82min; Prado (Olmedo) 82min

Mar 21 - Cali
America (Col) 2 (Vasquez 5, 85)
Bolivar 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Solorzano (Ven)

Mar 26 - La Paz
Bolivar 2 (Botero 26, Chiorazzo 32)
Olmedo 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Gonzalez (Par)
Sent off: Preciado (Olmedo) 86min

Mar 27 - Cali
America 5 (Ferreira 20, Mafla 65, 79, Moreno 71, Vargas pen 90)
Atletico Paranaense 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Gimenez (Arg)
Sent off: Flavio Luis (Atletico) 90min

GROUP 4 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
America (Col)	6	3	2	1	10	3	11
Olmedo	6	3	0	3	7	7	9
Bolivar	6	2	2	2	11	13	8
At Paranaense	6	1	2	3	10	15	5

Group 5

Mar 13 - Buenos Aires
Velez Sarsfield (Arg) 2 (F Dominguez pen 48, Nanni 86)
Atletico Morelia (Mex) 3 (Fernandes 68, 78, Noriega 75)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Torres (Par)
Sent off: Cubero (Velez) 10min

Mar 14 - Montevideo
Nacional (Uru) 1 (O Morales 27)
Sporting Cristal (Per) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Sequeira (Arg)
Sent off: Villalta (Sporting) 71min

Mar 20 - Lima
Sporting Cristal 2 (Julinho 21, Maestri 43)
Velez Sarsfield 3 (F Dominguez 3, Dudar 5, Fuentes 72)
HT: 2-2. **Ref:** Toro (Col)

Apr 4 - Morelia
Atletico Morelia 4 (Noriega 4, pen 64, Glaria 44, Fernandez 54)
Nacional 2 (Varela 15, Rodriguez 52)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Souza Mendonca (Bra)

GROUP 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
At Morelia	5	3	2	0	14	7	11
Velez Sarsfield	5	2	2	1	8	7	8
Nacional	5	2	2	1	12	12	8
Sporting Cristal	5	0	0	5	5	13	0

Apr 11: Sporting Cristal v Atletico Morelia
Apr 11: Velez Sarsfield v Nacional

Group 6

Mar 13 - Guayaquil
Emelec (Ecu) 0
Montevideo Wanderers (Uru) 1 (Blanco pen 85)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Russi (Col)

Mar 14 - Vina del Mar
Santiago Wanderers (Chl) 1 (Fernandez 47)
Boca Juniors (Arg) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Hidalgo (Per)

Mar 20 - Montevideo
Montevideo Wanderers 3 (Eguren 29, Fernandez og 55, Blanco 74)
Santiago Wanderers 1 (Robles 81)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Brazenas (Arg)
Sent off: Aparicio (Mont Wanderers) 83min; Villarroel 36min, Cancino 90min (both Sant Wanderers)

Mar 20 - Buenos Aires
Boca Juniors 1 (Barros Schelotto 23)
Emelec 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Quelhas (Bra)

GROUP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mont Wanderers	5	3	1	1	8	5	10
Boca Juniors	5	3	1	1	5	2	10
Sant Wanderers	5	1	3	1	4	5	6
Emelec	5	0	1	4	3	8	1

Apr 10: Montevideo Wanderers v Boca Juniors
Apr 10: Santiago Wanderers v Emelec

Group 7

Mar 12 - Pereira
Tulua (Col) 4 (Pereira dos Santos 7, 24, Candelo pen 46, Ferreira de Oliveira 62)
Talleres Cordoba (Arg) 2 (Fernandez 59, Astudillo 89)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Solorzano (Ven)

Mar 13 - Mexico City
America (Mex) 0
River Plate (Arg) 0
Ref: Ruiz (Col)

Mar 21 - Cordoba
Talleres Cordoba 0
America 1 (Hernandez 23)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Rezende (Bra)
Sent off: Mendoza (America) 89min

Mar 21 - Pereira
Tulua 2 (Posada 47, Ferreira de Oliveira 80)
River Plate 5 (Dominguez 8, 60, Lequi 37, Ortega 55, Demichelli 70)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Lecca (Per)

GROUP 7

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
America (Mex)	5	4	1	0	6	0	13
River Plate	5	2	2	1	7	3	8
Talleres Cordoba	5	1	1	3	4	8	4
Tulua	5	1	0	4	7	13	3

Apr 11: Talleres Cordoba v River Plate
Apr 11: America v Tulua

Group 8

Mar 13 - Santiago
Universidad Catolica (Chl) 2 (Mirosevic 20, Ramirez 64)
Flamengo (Bra) 1 (Felipe 4)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Lecca (Per)
Sent off: Leandro Machado 61min, Juan 75min (both Flamengo); Solis (U Catolica) 85min

Mar 19 - Manizales
Once Caldas (Col) 2 (Foronda 9, Galvan 89)
Olimpia (Par) 1 (Caballero 66)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Hidalgo (Per)
Sent off: Diaz (Once Caldas) 74min

Apr 2 - Asuncion
Olimpia 1 (Estigarribia 75)
Universidad Catolica 1 (Arancibia 62)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Pezzota (Arg)
Sent off: Campos (U Catolica) 25min; Orteman (Olimpia) 45min

GROUP 8

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Once Caldas	5	3	0	2	9	8	9
Olimpia	5	2	2	1	6	5	8
U Catolica	5	2	1	2	6	7	7
Flamengo	5	1	1	3	6	7	4

Apr 10: Olimpia v Flamengo
Apr 10: Universidad Catolica v Once Caldas

Top two from each group qualify for second round

ARGENTINA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Friday, March 8

Independiente 0
Colon Santa Fe 1 (Graf pen 39)

Saturday, March 9

Huracan 0
Talleres Cordoba 1 (La Paglia 51)

Newell's Old Boys 1 (Sacripanti 67)
San Lorenzo 4 (Sarria 9, Pusineri 51, Franco 80, Acosta 89)

Velez Sarsfield 1 (Fuentes 47)
Gimnasia LP 2 (Enria 31, Messera 35)

Sunday, March 10

Banfield 1 (Lujambio 11)
Chacarita Juniors 0

Belgrano Cordoba 0
Racing Club 1 (Chatruc 70)

Boca Juniors 0
River Plate 3 (Cambiasso 26, Coudet 41, Rojas 88)

Estudiantes 2 (Astudillo 84, Farias 90)
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Sanzotti pen 45)

Nueva Chicago 1 (Gomez 74)
Lanus 1 (Belloso 70)

Union Santa Fe 3 (N Fernandez 38, Frutos 71, Capria 81)
Rosario Central 1 (Sanchez 50)

Wednesday, March 13

Nueva Chicago 1 (Arguello 90)
Chacarita Juniors 1 (Bustos Montoya 8)

Friday, March 15

San Lorenzo 0
Belgrano Cordoba 0

Saturday, March 16

Chacarita Juniors 1 (Moreno pen 42)
Velez Sarsfield 1 (F Dominguez pen 74)

Colon Santa Fe 2 (Capurro 21, Castagno Suarez 76)
Newell's Old Boys 2 (Sacripanti 20, 45)

Racing Club 2 (Estevez 53, Chatruc 70)
Huracan 1 (Godoy 59)

Sunday, March 17

Argentinos Juniors 1 (Cordone 28)
Nueva Chicago 1 (Mandra 12)

Gimnasia LP 2 (Sava pen 26, San Esteban 62)
Independiente 1 (Vuoso 40)

Lanus 1 (Mannara 51)
Boca Juniors 0

River Plate 0
Banfield 0

Rosario Central 2 (Arias pen 81, Ferrari 90)
Estudiantes 0

Talleres Cordoba 1 (Maidana pen 78)
Union Santa Fe 0

Friday, March 22

Independiente 1 (Galvan 43)
Chacarita Juniors 3 (Bustos Montoya 12, Romero 19, Mignini 25)

Saturday, March 23

Belgrano Cordoba 0
Colon Santa Fe 1 (Delgado 36)

Newell's Old Boys 0
Gimnasia LP 1 (Enria 90)

Nueva Chicago 0
Rosario Central 1 (De Bruno 81)

San Lorenzo 0
Racing Club 1 (Estevez 42)

Union Santa Fe 0
Huracan 1 (Gonzalez 59)

Sunday, March 24

Banfield 2 (Lujambio 19, Jimenez 27)
Lanus 2 (Belloso 34, Bustos 40)

Boca Juniors 3 (Bracamonte 14, 17, Battaglia 83)
Argentinos Juniors 2 (Tilger 40, Cordone 50)

Estudiantes 4 (Osorio 33, Maggiolo 36, 85, Farias 72)
Talleres Cordoba 0

Velez Sarsfield 0
River Plate 1 (D'Alessandro 58)

Tuesday, March 26

Racing Club 0
Union Santa Fe 0

Wednesday, March 27

Argentinos Juniors 2 (Cordone 11, Tilger 43)
Banfield 1 (Bueno 77)

Chacarita Juniors 2 (Mignini 50, Quinteros 83)
Newell's Old Boys 1 (Gigena 33)

Colon Santa Fe 0
San Lorenzo 1 (Michelini 90)

Gimnasia LP 4 (Sava 32, 62, pen 74, Gonzalez 70)
Belgrano Cordoba 3 (Bordicio 6, Zarate 24, Arce 90)

Lanus 1 (Alvarez 56)
Velez Sarsfield 1 (Valdemarin 37)

River Plate 1 (Zelaye og 11)
Independiente 0

Rosario Central 1 (Rivarola 79)
Boca Juniors 3 (Bracamonte 7, 56, Schiavi 11)

Talleres Cordoba 0
Nueva Chicago 1 (Barbona 42)

Thursday, March 28

Huracan 1 (Adippe 1)
Estudiantes 6 (Farias 12, 13, 41, Quatrocchi 34, Maggiolo 56, 85)

Friday, March 29

Colon Santa Fe 2 (Carignano 59, Pereyra pen 90)
Racing Club 0

Saturday, March 30

Banfield 2 (Lezcano 63, Lujambio 78)
Rosario Central 1 (Figueroa 35)

Independiente 1 (Rios 90)
Lanus 1 (Gonzalez 46)

Velez Sarsfield 0
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Liendo 32)

Sunday, March 31

Belgrano Cordoba 1 (Brusco 77)
Chacarita Juniors 0

Boca Juniors 1 (Schiavi 62)
Talleres Cordoba 0

Estudiantes 3 (Farias 49, 62, Maggiolo 53)
Union Santa Fe 2 (Raggio 4, Ortiz 56)

Newell's Old Boys 1 (Rodriguez 37)
River Plate 0

Nueva Chicago 0
Huracan 4 (Montenegro 23, 45, 58, Gonzalez 44)

San Lorenzo 3 (Rodriguez 29, Acosta 54, Bevacqua 73)
Gimnasia LP 3 (Sava 39, 52, Messera 75)

Tuesday, April 2

Argentinos Juniors 1 (Cogliandro 71)
Independiente 0

Rosario Central 0
Velez Sarsfield 3 (Centurion 43, Gracian 61, Valdemarin 90)

Wednesday, April 3

Chacarita Juniors 0
San Lorenzo 1 (Di Lorenzo 80)

Gimnasia LP 1 (Enria 84)
Colon Santa Fe 0

Huracan 0
Boca Juniors 2 (Carreno 20, Bracamonte 86)

Lanus 1 (Gonzalez 22)
Newell's Old Boys 0

Racing Club 0
Estudiantes 0

River Plate 2 (Cambiasso 30, D'Alessandro pen 39)
Belgrano Cordoba 1 (Obolo 5)

Talleres Cordoba 1 (F Astudillo 90)
Banfield 2 (Lujambio 63, Sanchez pen 84)

Union Santa Fe 0
Nueva Chicago 2 (Gomez 24, Herbella 71)

ARGENTINA – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
River Plate	11	8	2	1	23	5	26
Gimnasia LP	11	7	3	1	22	15	24
Boca Juniors	11	6	3	2	17	12	21
San Lorenzo	11	5	3	3	16	10	18
Banfield	11	5	3	3	14	11	18
Racing Club	11	5	3	3	12	10	18
Estudiantes	11	5	2	4	22	17	17
Lanus	11	3	6	2	11	10	15
Argentinos Jnrs	11	4	3	4	13	15	15
Huracan	11	5	0	6	14	17	15
Colon Santa Fe	11	4	2	5	12	11	14
Newell's OB	11	4	2	5	14	18	14
Velez Sarsfield	11	3	4	4	15	12	13
Chacarita Jnrs	11	3	4	4	12	13	13
Nueva Chicago	11	3	4	4	9	14	13
Talleres Cordoba	11	4	0	7	8	16	12
Belgrano Cordoba	11	3	1	7	10	15	10
Independiente	11	3	1	7	10	16	10
Rosario Central	11	3	1	7	9	17	10
Union Santa Fe	11	2	3	6	12	21	9

LEADING GOALSCORERS

9 Ernesto Farias (Estudiantes)
9 Josemir Lujambio (Banfield)
8 Fernando Cavenaghi (River Plate)
8 Facundo Sava (Gimnasia LP)
7 Ariel Ortega (River Plate)

BOLIVIA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 5: Blooming 2 Bolivar 1.
Mar 9: Bolivar 3 Union Central 1; Mariscal Braun 0 Independiente 2; Real Potosi 2 The Strongest 2.
Mar 10: Oriente 8 Guabira 0; San Jose 2 Iberoamericana 1; Jorge Wilstermann 4 Blooming 1.
Mar 16: Guabira 3 Real Potosi 1; Independiente 0 Bolivar 2; The Strongest 2 Iberoamericana 1.
Mar 17: Blooming 2 Oriente 4; Mariscal Braun 2 San Jose 1; Union Central 2 Wilstermann 2.

BOLIVIA – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Oriente	4	3	0	1	19	4	9
Bolivar	4	3	0	1	13	3	9
J Wilstermann	4	2	1	1	8	6	7
San Jose	4	2	1	1	7	5	7
The Strongest	4	2	1	1	6	5	7
Blooming	4	2	0	2	7	10	6
Guabira	4	2	0	2	6	17	6
Union Central	3	1	1	1	5	5	4
Independiente	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Real Potosi	4	1	1	2	6	8	4
Mariscal Braun	4	1	0	3	3	7	3
Iberoamericana	4	0	0	4	2	12	0

CHILE

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 9: Dep Concepcion 0 Audax Italiano 1; Cobreloa 0 Colo Colo 2; Coquimbo Unido 2 Rangers 2; Union Espanola 3 San Felipe 1.
Mar 10: Palestino 1 Santiago Wanderers 0; U Catolica 2 Santiago Morning 3; Cobresal 2 Dep Temuco 4; U de Chile 3 Huachipato 2.
Mar 16: San Felipe 0 Coquimbo Unido 1; Santiago Morning 1 Palestino 1; Colo Colo 2 Dep Concepcion 0.
Mar 17: Audax Italiano 2 U de Chile 1; Huachipato 3 Cobresal 1; Dep Temuco 0 Union Espanola 0; Rangers 3 U Catolica 1; Santiago Wanderers 0 Cobreloa 3.

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Huachipato	5	2	0	3	9	9	6
Cobresal	5	2	0	3	9	13	6
Sant Morning	5	1	2	2	6	7	5
Sant Wanderers	5	1	1	3	5	9	4

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Audax Italiano	5	4	0	1	8	5	12
Palestino	5	3	2	0	10	6	11
U Catolica	5	2	1	2	9	9	7
Dep Temuco	5	2	1	2	9	9	7

GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	5	3	1	1	10	6	10
U de Chile	5	3	0	2	9	7	9
Cobreloa	5	2	1	2	7	7	7
Dep Concepcion	5	0	1	4	5	10	1

GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colo Colo	5	3	1	1	10	5	10
Coquimbo Unido	5	3	1	1	8	6	10
Union Espanola	5	1	2	2	5	8	5
San Felipe	5	1	0	4	5	8	3

COLOMBIA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 7: Tolima 0 Millonarios 0.
Mar 8: Magdalena 1 Indep Medellin 1; Real Cartagena 4 At Huila 0; Bucaramanga 1 Pereira 0; Quindio 0 Dep Pasto 0; Dep Cali 2 Millonarios 0; Tolima 2 Envigado 1; At Nacional 1 At Junior 1.
Mar 11: Indep Santa Fe 1 America 2.
Mar 14: Millonarios 0 Real Cartagena 0; America 2 Once Caldas 2; Dep Pasto 5 Dep Cali 3; Envigado 0 Indep Santa Fe 0; At Junior 2 Tolima 1; Tulua 0 Bucaramanga 1; Pereira 3 Quindio 0; At Huila 1 Magdalena 1.
Mar 16: Tulua 1 America 3.
Mar 17: Bucaramanga 2 Quindio 1; Dep Cali 3 Pereira 0; Real Cartagena 2 Dep Pasto 2; Magdalena 1 Millonarios 0; At Nacional 2 At Huila 1; Tolima 1 Indep Medellin 1; Indep Santa Fe 2 At Junior 0; Once Caldas 4 Envigado 1.

COLOMBIA – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bucaramanga	9	6	2	1	11	6	20
At Nacional	8	4	3	1	10	6	15
Magdalena	9	4	3	2	12	11	15
Dep Cali	9	4	1	4	17	13	13
Envigado	9	4	1	4	7	9	13
America	8	3	4	1	14	11	13
Indep Santa Fe	8	3	3	2	10	5	12
Millonarios	9	3	3	3	9	7	12
Pereira	9	3	3	3	7	8	12
Quindio	9	3	3	3	13	18	12
Indep Medellin	8	2	4	2	10	8	10
Real Cartagena	9	2	4	3	9	7	10
Tolima	9	2	4	3	9	10	10
Once Caldas	7	2	3	2	14	10	9
At Huila	9	2	3	4	9	15	9
At Junior	9	2	2	5	9	15	8
Dep Pasto	9	1	4	4	10	15	7
Tulua	7	1	2	4	5	11	5

ECUADOR

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 8: Dep Cuenca 1 Dep Quito 1.
Mar 9: El Nacional 1 Olmedo 0; Barcelona 2 LDU Quito 2.
Mar 10: Aucas 1 Macara 1; Espoli 2 Emelec 1.
Mar 16: Dep Quito 3 Aucas 0; Macara 1 El Nacional 0; Emelec 3 Olmedo 0.
Mar 17: LDU Quito 2 Dep Cuenca 0; Espoli 0 Barcelona 0.

ECUADOR – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Emelec	7	5	0	2	20	8	15
LDU Quito	7	3	3	1	11	6	12
Barcelona	7	3	2	2	7	7	11
Espoli	7	3	2	2	9	10	11
Dep Quito	7	3	2	2	7	8	11
Aucas	7	3	1	3	7	10	10
Macara	7	2	2	3	9	10	8
El Nacional	7	2	1	4	7	6	7
Dep Cuenca	7	1	3	3	6	14	6
Olmedo	7	1	2	4	6	10	5

PARAGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 8: Sol de America 2 Libertad 0; 12 de Octubre 1 San Lorenzo 1.
Mar 9: Recoleta 2 Cerro Porteno 4.
Mar 10: Guarani 2 Olimpia 1; Sportivo Luqueno 3 Sport Colombia 1.
Mar 13: Olimpia 1 Sportivo Luqueno 2.
Mar 15: Libertad 1 12 de Octubre 0.
Mar 16: Olimpia 3 Sport Colombia 3.
Mar 17: Sportivo Luqueno 2 Recoleta 0; San Lorenzo 0 Guarani 1; Cerro Porteno 3 Sol de America 1.

PARAGUAY – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sportivo Luqueno	7	5	1	1	13	7	16
Libertad	7	5	0	2	15	10	15
12 de Octubre	6	4	1	1	7	3	13
Cerro Porteno	7	4	0	3	14	13	12
Sport Colombia	7	3	1	3	21	12	10
Olimpia	6	3	1	2	10	9	10
Sol de America	7	3	1	3	10	11	10
Guarani	7	2	0	5	10	16	6
San Lorenzo	7	0	3	4	7	11	3
Recoleta	7	0	2	5	5	20	2

PERU

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 9: Sport Boys 0 Universitario 1; Coronel Bolognesi 3 Cienciano 2.
Mar 10: Alianza Atletico 3 Juan Aurich 0; Coopsol Trujillo 0 Sporting Cristal 3; Alianza Lima 2 Melgar 1; Estudiantes 1 Dep Wanka 0.
Mar 16: Juan Aurich 1 Estudiantes 2.
Mar 17: Dep Wanka 0 Coronel Bolognesi 1; Melgar 1 Alianza Atletico 1; Sporting Cristal 1 Sport Boys 1.
Mar 19: Universitario 0 Alianza Lima 1.

PERU – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Universitario	4	3	0	1	6	3	9
Coronel Bolognesi	4	3	0	1	9	7	9
Sporting Cristal	4	2	2	0	7	3	8
Alianza Atletico	4	2	1	1	6	3	7
Alianza Lima	4	2	0	2	4	4	6
Estudiantes	4	2	0	2	5	6	6
Cienciano	3	1	1	1	6	6	4
Sport Boys	4	1	1	2	5	5	4
Melgar	4	1	1	2	6	7	4
Coopsol Trujillo	3	1	1	1	2	4	4
Dep Wanka	4	1	0	3	2	5	3
Juan Aurich	4	0	1	3	3	8	1

URUGUAY

CLASSIFICATION STAGE

Mar 9: Bella Vista P 0 Nacional 2; Plaza 1 Wanderers 1; Bella Vista M 1 Penarol 4.
Mar 10: Tacuarembo 2 Dep Maldonado 4.
Mar 11: Juventud 0 Central Espanol 1; Cerro 0 Defensor 5; River Plate 3 Villa Espanola 1; Fenix 4 Progreso 0; Danubio 2 Racing 1.
Mar 15: Defensor 1 Danubio 3.
Mar 16: Penarol 1 River Plate 1.
Mar 17: Villa Espanola 4 Racing 0; Dep Maldonado 2 Montevideo Wanderers 0; Central Espanol 2 Progreso 1; Tacuarembo 1 Nacional 3; Plaza 2 Cerro 1; Bella Vista M 0 Fenix 1.
Mar 20: Juventud 5 Bella Vista P 1.

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nacional	8	7	0	1	23	5	21
Danubio	8	6	0	2	15	7	18
Fenix	8	5	2	1	16	9	17
River Plate	8	3	3	2	16	11	12
Villa Espanola	8	1	3	4	9	13	6
Bella Vista M	8	1	3	4	11	16	6
Progreso	8	0	3	5	5	18	2

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Penarol	8	4	4	0	19	10	16
Central Espanol	8	5	1	2	11	12	16
Defensor	8	4	2	2	12	7	14
Wanderers	8	3	1	4	11	15	10
Racing	8	2	2	4	10	15	8
Cerro	8	0	3	5	12	22	3

GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Plaza	8	4	2	2	9	8	14
Dep Maldonado	8	3	1	4	12	10	10
Juventud	8	3	1	4	12	13	10
Tacuarembo	8	2	4	2	9	11	10
Bella Vista P	8	1	1	6	4	14	4

Top two from each group, plus the four best teams overall other than the group top twos, qualify for opening and closing championships

VENEZUELA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 7: Nacional 1 Dep Tachira 0.
Mar 10: Galicia 1 Ital-Chacao 4; Nacional 1 Monagas 0; Estudiantes 3 Portuguesa 0; Mineros Guayana 0 Dep Tachira 2; Caracas 1 Trujillanos 1.
Mar 13: Galicia 1 Monagas 0; Ital-Chacao 2 Portuguesa 0; Estudiantes 2 Trujillanos 1; Mineros Guayana 2 Caracas 1.
Mar 17: Galicia 0 Caracas 1; Trujillanos 3 Mineros Guayana 0; Dep Tachira 3 Estudiantes 1; Portuguesa 3 Nacional 3; Monagas 3 Ital-Chacao 0.

VENEZUELA – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nacional	9	6	2	1	19	7	20
Ital-Chacao	9	6	1	2	14	8	19
Monagas	9	5	1	3	16	10	16
Dep Tachira	9	4	3	2	14	10	15
Estudiantes	9	3	3	3	12	9	12
Caracas	9	3	2	4	18	14	11
Trujillanos	9	3	2	4	13	9	11
Galicia	9	2	3	4	8	17	9
Mineros Guayana	8	1	2	5	5	19	5
Portuguesa	8	0	3	5	14	30	3

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

MEXICO

SUMMER LEAGUE

Mar 5: America 0 Necaxa 0.
Mar 9: Toluca 2 America 1; Cruz Azul 4 Atlas 2; Monterrey 0 Atletico Morelia 3; Tecos UAG 2 Puebla 1; Necaxa 3 Pachuca 0.
Mar 10: Atletico Celaya 2 Atlante 1; Guadalajara 0 Santos 0; Pumas UNAM 2 Veracruz 1; Leon 2 Tigres 3.
Mar 16: Veracruz 1 Leon 0; Tigres 3 Necaxa 3; Atlante 0 Guadalajara 0; Puebla 2 La Piedad 4; Atlas 2 Pumas UNAM 1.
Mar 17: Atletico Morelia 2 Atletico Celaya 0; Pachuca 1 Toluca 2; Santos 3 Tecos UAG 2; America 4 Monterrey 2.

GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atlas	11	6	3	2	19	16	21
Cruz Azul	11	6	1	4	22	17	19
Guadalajara	12	4	6	2	16	12	18
Monterrey	12	4	2	6	18	21	14
At Celaya	12	3	2	7	13	21	11

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Toluca	12	7	4	1	21	8	25
La Piedad	11	7	1	3	17	9	22
Santos	11	5	3	3	23	19	18
At Morelia	10	4	3	3	14	11	15
Veracruz	11	4	2	5	14	18	14

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Necaxa	11	4	5	2	23	15	17
America	11	5	2	4	15	12	17
Atlante	11	1	4	6	11	16	7
Tecos UAG	11	1	4	6	13	23	7
Leon	12	1	3	8	9	22	6

GROUP 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pumas UNAM	12	5	4	3	20	16	19
Tigres	11	5	4	2	19	15	19
Pachuca	11	5	2	4	17	19	17
Puebla	11	1	3	7	12	26	6

LEADING GOALSCORERS

13 Sebastian Abreu (Cruz Azul)
8 Jose Cardozo (Toluca)
7 Jose Luis Calderon (Atlas)

UNITED STATES

Mar 23: Los Angeles Galaxy 2 DC United 1; Columbus Crew 0 Chicago Fire 2; MetroStars 3 New England Revolution 1; Kansas City Wizards 1 Colorado Rapids 1; Dallas Burn 0 San Jose Earthquakes 2.
Mar 27: MetroStars 0 Columbus Crew 1.
Mar 30: DC United 2 Chicago Fire 0; Colorado Rapids 1 San Jose Earthquakes 0.
Apr 3: Colorado Rapids 2 DC United 0.

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
MetroStars	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Chicago Fire	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
DC United	3	1	0	2	3	4	3
Columbus Crew	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
New England	1	0	0	1	1	3	0

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colorado Rapids	3	2	1	0	4	1	7
LA Galaxy	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
San Jose	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
Kansas City	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Dallas Burn	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

LEADING GOALSCORERS
3 Chris Henderson (Colorado Rapids)
2 Carlos Ruiz (Los Angeles Galaxy)

AFRICA

AFRICAN SUPER CUP

Mar 15 - Cairo
Al Ahly (Egy) 4 (Bebo 7, Ghaly 30, Al-Hadary 65, Abdelhafiz 69)
Kaizer Chiefs (SAf) 1 (Nzama 20)
HT: 2-1

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1st rnd, 1st legs

Mar 8: Al Ahly (Egy) 2 Oserian Fastac (Ken) 1.
Mar 9: Al Merreikh (Sud) 2 SC Villa (Uga) 1; Esperance (Tun) 5 Tourbillon (Chd) 1; Orlando Pirates (SAf) 2 St Louisienne (Reu) 1; Zamalek (Egy) 6 APR FC (Rwa) 0.
Mar 10: Al Madina (Lby) 3 Akonangui (EqG) 1; ASEC Abidjan (IvC) 4 FC 105 Libreville (Gab) 0; Chabab Belouizdad (Alg) 1 Jeanne d'Arc (Sen) 1; Cotonsport (Cam) 0 Etoile du Congo (Con) 1; Enyimba (Nig) 4 Etoile Filante (BuF) 0; Hearts of Oak (Gha) 1 Stade Malien (Mli) 1; Nkana FC (Zam) 4 Simba SC (Tan) 0; *Petro Atletico (Ang) 1 Stade Olympic de l'Emyrne (Mad) 1 *Stade Olympic 3-1 on pens*; Raja Casablanca (Mor) 2 Wallidan (Gam) 1; TP Mazembe (DRC) 2 Lesotho Defence Force 0.
Mar 17: Highlanders (Zim) 1 Costa do Sol (Moz) 0.

**Played over one leg in Luanda due to civil unrest in Madagascar*

1st rnd, 2nd legs

Mar 22: Simba SC 3 Nkana FC 0 *Nkana 4-3 on agg.*
Mar 23: Akonangui 4 Al Madina 2 *Agg 5-5. Al Madina on away goals*; Jeanne d'Arc 1 Chabab Belouizdad 0 *Jeanne d'Arc 2-1 on agg*; St Louisienne 0 Orlando Pirates 2 *Pirates 4-1 on agg*; Tourbillon 1 Esperance 3 *Esperance 8-2 on agg*; Wallidan 1 Raja Casablanca 3 *Raja 5-2 on agg.*
Mar 24: APR FC 0 Zamalek 0 *Zamalek 6-0 on agg*; Costa do Sol 2 Highlanders 0 *Costa do Sol 2-1 on agg*; Etoile du Congo 1 Cotonsport 1 *Etoile 2-1 on agg*; Etoile Filante 3 Enyimba 1 *Enyimba 5-3 on agg*; FC 105 Libreville 2 ASEC Abidjan 4 *ASEC 8-2 on agg*; Lesotho Defence Force 1 TP Mazembe 1 *TP Mazembe 3-1 on agg*; Oserian Fastac 0 Al Ahly 0 *Al Ahly 2-1 on agg*; SC Villa 2 Al Merreikh 2 *Al Merreikh 4-3 on agg*; Stade Malien 3 Hearts of Oak 1 *Stade Malien 4-2 on agg.*

2nd rnd draw

Stade Olympic de l'Emyrne v Costa do Sol;
ASEC Abidjan v Enyimba;
Zamalek v Nkana FC;
Raja Casablanca v Etoile du Congo;
Esperance v Al Madina;
Stade Malien v Jeanne d'Arc;
TP Mazembe v Orlando Pirates;
Al Ahly v Al Merreikh.
1st legs, Apr 12-14; 2nd legs, Apr 26-28

The eight winners go into the draw for the Champions League group phase, to be conducted in July.

CUP-WINNERS CUP

1st rnd, 1st legs

Mar 9: AS Sonacos (Sen) 0 Wydad Casablanca (Mor) 0; Express (Uga) 2 Al Mehalla (Egy) 1; Kaizer Chiefs (SAf) 4 US Transfoot (Mad) 0; Maxaquene (Moz) 3 Santos (SAf) 1; Polisi Zanzibar (Tan) 0 CS Hammam-Lif (Tun) 2.
Mar 10: AFC Leopards (Ken) 0 Al Mourada (Sud) 1; AS Kaloum (Gui) 2 Mangasport (Gab) 2; Atletico Malabo (EqG) 2 Al Ahli (Lby) 2; Dolphin FC (Nig) 1 AS Police (Con) 0; Gazelle (Chd) 0 USM Alger (Alg) 0; Les Citadins (Rwa) 1 Fovu de Baham (Cam) 3; Mamahira AC (Mli) 0 Alliance (IvC) 4; US Beau Bassin-Rose Hill (Mrs) 0 Jeanne d'Arc (Reu) 1.
Mar 11: Asante Kotoko (Gha) 2 Sonangol Namibie (Ang) 0.
Mar 16: Shabanie (Zim) 1 St Michel United (Sey) 0.
Mar 30: Zanaco (Zam) 4 AS Vita Club (DRC) 1.

1st rnd, 2nd legs

Mar 22: Al Mehalla 2 Express 1 *Agg 3-3. Al Mehalla 4-1 on pens*; Santos 2 Maxaquene 0 *Agg 3-3. Santos on away goals.*
Mar 23: AS Police 2 Dolphin FC 0 *Police 2-1 on agg*; CS Hammam-Lif 7 Polisi Zanzibar 0 *Hammam Lif 9-0 on agg*; Mangasport 5 AS Kaloum 1 *Mangasport 7-3 on agg*; Sonangol Namibie 2 Asante Kotoko 2 *Asante 4-2 on agg.*
Mar 24: Al Ahli 3 Atletico Malabo 0 *Al Ahli 5-2 on agg*; Al Mourada 0 AFC Leopards 0 *Al Mourada 1-0 on agg*; Alliance 2 Mamahira AC 0 *Alliance 6-0 on agg*; Fovu de Baham 1 Les Citadins 0 *Fovu 4-1 on agg*; Jeanne d'Arc 0 US Beau Bassin-Rose Hill 0 *Jeanne d'Arc 1-0 on agg*; USM Alger 6 Gazelle 1 *USM 6-1 on agg*; Wydad Casablanca 3 AS Sonacos 0 *Wydad 3-0 on agg*;
Mar 30: St Michel United 3 Shabanie 0 *St Michel 3-1 on agg.*

Still to play: AS Vita Club v Zanaco

US Transfoot v Kaizer Chiefs – Kaizer Chiefs did not arrive for the 2nd leg and were subsequently expelled from the competition; US Transfoot qualify

2nd rnd draw

Mangasport v USM Alger;
Al Ahli v Al Mehalla;
Alliance v Wydad Casablanca;
AS Police v Fovu de Baham;
Al Mourada v CS Hammam-Lif;
Jeanne d'Arc v US Transfoot;
Santos v Asante Kotoko;
*St Michel United v Zanaco or AS Vita Club.
1st legs, Apr 12-14; 2nd legs, Apr 26-28
**1st leg, Apr 26-28; 2nd leg, May 10-12*

The eight winners go into the quarter-final draw, to be conducted in July

CAF CUP

1st rnd, 1st legs

Mar 8: Atahadi (Lby) 1 FUS Rabat (Mor) 3.
Mar 9: Alkali Nassara (Ngr) 0 Maranatha de Fiokpo (Tog) 3; ASFA Yennega (BuF) 1 ASC Ndiambour (Sen) 1; Mtibwa Sugar (Tan) 0 Ferroviario Maputo (Moz) 0; NPA FC (Nig) 2 Djoliba (Mli) 1; Satellite FC (IvC) 1 La Mancha (Con) 0; St Pierroise (Reu) 2 ASA (Mad) 1; TP Akwembe (Gab) 3 Utexafrica (DRC) 0.
Mar 10: Al Masry (Egy) 2 Mathare United (Ken) 0; AS Aviacao (Ang) 1 Rayon Sport (Rwa) 0; Goldfields (Gha) 4 Satellite (Gui) 3; St George (Eth) 1 Kampala City Council (Uga) 0; Tonnerre Yaounde (Cam) 4 Deportivo Mongomo (EqG) 2.
Mar 17: Al Hilal (Sud) 2 Etoile Sahel (Tun) 1.

Kabwe Warriors (Zam) v Botswana Defence Force XI (Bot) – Kabwe withdrew; Defence Force walkover

Bye: JS Kabylie (Alg)

1st rnd, 2nd legs

Mar 23: Djoliba 3 NPA FC 0 *Djoliba 4-2 on agg*; Ferroviario Maputo 1 Mtibwa Sugar 1 *Agg 1-1. Mtibwa on away goals*; FUS Rabat 1 Atahadi 1 *FUS 4-2 on agg*; Kampala City Council 0 St George 0 *St George 1-0 on agg*; Mathare United 0 Al Masry 2 *Al Masry 4-0 on agg*; Rayon Sport 1 AS Aviacao 0 *Agg 1-1. Rayon 6-5 on pens.*
Mar 24: ASA 1 St Pierroise 0 *Agg 2-2. ASA on away goals*; ASC Ndiambour 0 ASFA Yennega 0 *Agg 1-1. Ndiambour on away goals*; Deportivo Mongomo 1 Tonnerre Yaounde 2 *Tonnerre 6-3 on agg*; Etoile Sahel 2 Al Hilal 0 *Etoile 3-2 on agg*; La Mancha 0 Satellite FC (IvC) 1 *Satellite 2-0 on agg*; Maranatha de Fiokpo 3 Alkali Nassara 1 *Maranatha 6-1 on agg*; Satellite (Gui) 2 Goldfields 1 *Agg 5-5. Satellite on away goals*; Utexafrica 4 TP Akwembe 1 *Agg 4-4. TP Akwembe on away goals.*

2nd rnd draw

St George v Etoile Sahel;
Botswana Defence Force XI v Al Masry;
ASA v Mtibwa Sugar;
FUS Rabat v Satellite FC (IvC);
Tonnerre Yaounde v TP Akwembe;
Rayon Sport v Satellite (Gui);
Maranatha de Fiokpo v Djoliba;
ASC Ndiambour v JS Kabylie.
1st legs, Apr 12-14; 2nd legs, Apr 26-28

The eight winners go into the quarter-final draw, to be conducted in July

ASIA

CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

Semi-finals

In Tehran
Apr 3: Esteghlal (Irn) 1 Anyang Cheetahs (SKo) 2; Suwon Bluewings (SKo) 3 Nasaf Qarshi (Uzb) 0.

Third-place play-off

Apr 5 - Tehran
Esteghlal 5 (Navazi 2, Karaev og, Fatemi, Pashazadeh)
Nasaf Qarshi 2 (Usmankhodjaev, Kholmurodov)

Final

Apr 5 - Tehran
Suwon Bluewings 0
Anyang Cheetahs 0
Aet. Bluewings 4-2 on pens

CUP-WINNERS CUP

Semi-finals

In Doha, Qatar
Mar 28: Al Saad (Qat) 0 Al Hilal (Sau) 1; Chonbuk Hyundai (SKo) 2 Chongqing Longxin (Chn) 0.

Third-place play-off

Mar 30: Al Saad 0 Chongqing Longxin 0 *Al Saad 7-6 on pens.*

Final

Mar 30 - Doha, Qatar
Al Hilal 2 (Edmilson 13, Al-Ali 98 - golden goal)
Chonbuk Hyundai 1 (Vieira pen 73)
Aet. **HT:** 1-0. **90mins:** 1-1

JAPAN

FIRST STAGE

Mar 2: FC Tokyo 4 Kashima Antlers 2; Jubilo Iwata 2 Nagoya Grampus Eight 0.
Mar 3: Vegalta Sendai 1 Tokyo Verdy 1969 0; Shimizu S-Pulse 1 Vissel Kobe 0 (aet); Yokohama F Marinos 1 Urawa Reds 0; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 5 Consadole Sapporo 1; JEF United Ichihara 2 Kyoto Purple Sanga 1; Gamba Osaka 1 Kashiwa Reysol 0.
Mar 9: Kashima Antlers 0 Shimizu S-Pulse 1 (aet); Nagoya Grampus Eight 0 Yokohama F Marinos 1; Vissel Kobe 0 JEF United Ichihara 1; Consadole Sapporo 0 Vegalta Sendai 1; Urawa Reds 0 FC Tokyo 1; Kashiwa Reysol 2 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1.
Mar 10: Tokyo Verdy 1969 2 Jubilo Iwata 3; Kyoto Purple Sanga 0 Gamba Osaka 2.
Mar 16: Nagoya Grampus Eight 1 Tokyo Verdy 1969 0; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 2 Kyoto Purple Sanga 1; JEF United Ichihara 0 Kashima Antlers 2; Vegalta Sendai 5 Kashiwa Reysol 2; FC Tokyo 1 Yokohama F Marinos 1 (aet); Shimizu S-Pulse 2 Urawa Reds 1.
Mar 17: Gamba Osaka 1 Vissel Kobe 3; Jubilo Iwata 4 Consadole Sapporo 0.

JAPAN – FIRST STAGE

	P	W1	W2	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jubilo Iwata	3	3	0	0	0	9	2	9
Vegalta Sendai	3	3	0	0	0	7	2	9
FC Tokyo	3	2	0	1	0	6	3	7
Shimizu S-Pulse	3	1	2	0	0	4	1	7
Yokohama FM	3	2	0	1	0	3	1	7
Sanfrecce H	3	2	0	0	1	8	4	6
Gamba Osaka	3	2	0	0	1	4	3	6
JEF United	3	2	0	0	1	3	3	6
Vissel Kobe	3	1	0	0	2	3	3	3
Kashima Antlers	3	1	0	0	2	4	5	3
Grampus Eight	3	1	0	0	2	1	3	3
Kashiwa Reysol	3	1	0	0	2	4	7	3
Tokyo Verdy	3	0	0	0	3	2	5	0
Urawa Reds	3	0	0	0	3	1	4	0
Kyoto PS	3	0	0	0	3	2	6	0
Consadole Sapp	3	0	0	0	3	1	10	0

W1 = win in 90mins – 3pts; W2 = win in extra time – 2pts; Draw = 1pt

THAILAND

THAILAND – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
BEC Tero Sasana	22	15	5	2	41	11	50
Osothsapa	22	13	5	4	34	21	44
Bangkok Bank	22	9	8	5	21	17	35
Royal Air Force	22	8	8	6	23	21	32
Sinthana	22	6	12	4	25	21	30
Port Authority	22	6	10	6	26	23	28
Krung Thai Bank	22	7	7	8	23	23	28
Tobacco M'poly	22	8	2	12	24	35	26
Telephone Org	22	6	6	10	18	24	24
Rajnavi	22	6	3	13	14	31	21
Police	22	4	7	11	16	24	19
Ratana Bundit	22	3	9	10	10	24	18

Brave face...Robert Pires, his right leg in a knee brace, watches the French train from the touchline

Pires out of finals

France

Robert Pires will miss the World Cup after damaging knee ligaments in Arsenal's FA Cup quarter-final victory over Newcastle.

Pires, who has been in outstanding form for Arsenal and a leading candidate to be voted footballer of the year by the English media and players, could be out of action for up to eight months. "There is nothing to be done, my hopes are dead," he said.

The injury to Pires boosted the hopes of Youri Djorkaeff, who received his first call-up since last October when he was named in the squad to play Scotland at Stade de France and appeared as a substitute as the French ran out 5-0 winners.

Argentina

Veteran striker Claudio Caniggia has been included in the squad to face Germany on April 17, along with Real Madrid midfielder Santiago Solari.

Internazionale defender Nelson Vivas hopes to be fit for the World Cup after a training injury, thought to be knee ligament damage, turned out to be less serious.

Juan Veron, playing in a deep role in place of the injured Diego Simeone, was Argentina's best performer in a 2-2 draw with Cameroon in Geneva and opened the scoring from the penalty spot. Pablo Aimar scored Argentina's second in a sweeping counter-attacking move.

Squad to play Germany: Goalkeepers: Burgos (Atletico Madrid), Cavallero (Celta Vigo). Defenders: Chamot (PSG), Pochettino (PSG), Samuel (Roma), Quiroga (Sporting), Zanetti (Internazionale). Midfielders: Almeyda (Parma), Placente (Bayer Leverkusen), Sorin (Cruzeiro), Kily Gonzalez (Valencia), Veron (Manchester United), Aimar (Valencia), Gallardo (Monaco), Solari (Real Madrid). Forwards: Gustavo Lopez (Celta Vigo), Claudio Lopez (Lazio), Caniggia (Rangers), Batistuta (Roma).

Belgium

Coach Robert Waseige left out Eric Van Meir, Glen De Boeck and Yves Vanderhaeghe from his squad to face Greece. "I am not dropping them, but it will do them good to reflect on their position," Waseige said.

Brazil

Ronaldo started his first game for the *selecao* since the friendly against Holland in October 1999 when he played the first half of the 1-0 win over Yugoslavia in Fortaleza. 12 overseas-based players were included in the squad to play the Yugoslavs, including Djalminha of Deportivo La Coruna, but neither Jardel of Sporting Lisbon nor Bayern's Giovane Elber was called up.

Coach Luiz Felipe Scolari says he has 90 per cent of his World Cup squad selected and will name his final squad ahead of friendly games against Portugal (April 17, Lisbon), Catalan Xl (May 18, Barcelona) and Malaysia (May 26, Kuala Lumpur).

Cameroon

Arsenal defender Lauren Etame-Mayer and Sunderland striker Patrick Mboma were both missing from the team that drew 2-2 with Argentina in Geneva.

Patrick Suffo, scorer of the late equaliser against the Argentinians, has left Sheffield United after playing a prominent part in the so-called 'Battle of Bramall Lane'. Suffo was one of the United players sent off against West Brom, a match that had to be abandoned when United were reduced to seven men. Suffo has joined Spanish side Numancia on loan.

Costa Rica

There are major injury doubts over strikers Hernan Medford and Paulo Wanchope. Medford, 34, was advised by doctors to forget about the World Cup after damaging his knee playing for Saprissa in a local derby against Alajuelense, while Wanchope faces a race against time to be fit after being injured in Manchester City's push for promotion to the English Premiership.

Costa Rican federation president Hermes Navarro has resigned, along with the rest of his executive committee, following pressure from local clubs. The resignations followed arguments over the release of local league players for the national team friendly against South Korea on April 17.

Denmark

Chelsea winger Jesper Gronkjaer has returned to the national side after a long injury lay-off. He was in the starting line-up as the Danes were beaten 3-0 by the Republic of Ireland in Dublin.

Ecuador

Ivan Kaviedes scored twice as Ecuador beat Bulgaria 3-0 at Giants Stadium, New York. The result made up for the earlier 1-0 defeat by the United States in Birmingham, Alabama, and prompted coach Hernan Dario Gomez to say: "We're getting better and better."

The game against Latvia, scheduled for April 16, has been cancelled.

England

The 2-1 defeat by Italy at Elland Road, Leeds, was dismissed by much of the media as a pointless exercise after coach Sven Goran Eriksson made 11 substitutions.

However, there were promising performances by Southampton left-back Wayne Bridge and Bayern Munich midfielder Owen Hargreaves.

Eriksson omitted a number of players from his squad to face the Italians, including Jonathan Woodgate, Lee Bowyer, Graeme Le Saux, Steve McManaman, Darren Anderton, Jamie Carragher and Nick Barmby, who must now all be considered unlikely to make the final squad.

Germany

Bayer Leverkusen striker Thomas Brdaric made his debut as a substitute in the 4-2 win over the United States in Rostock. Coach Rudi Voller fielded an experimental line-up after being deprived of a host of injured players.

The coach was hit by the withdrawal of Miroslav Klose, scorer of a hat-trick in the morale-boosting 8-2 win over Israel in February, Sebastian Kehl, Jens Nowotny and Christoph Metzelder. Germany were already without Sebastian Deisler, Christian Worns and Carsten Jancker.

Bayern Munich forward Alexander Zickler will miss the World Cup with a calf injury, while doubts are growing over Deisler's ability to recover from his serious knee injury in time.

Italy

Vincenzo Montella's two goals against England in the friendly match in Leeds confirmed the Roma striker as Italy's first-choice partner for Christian Vieri.

Japan

The national team have experienced morale-boosting wins over Ukraine and Poland in recent weeks.

Kashima Antlers midfielder Mitsuo Ogasawara won his first cap against the Ukrainians and impressed in an attacking role behind the strikers. However, Ogasawara faces strong competition.

Parma playmaker Hidetoshi Nakata was outstanding in the same role against the Poles in Lodz.

Mexico

Midfielder Jesus Arellano could be left out of the World Cup squad after FIFA increased his ban for kicking Costa Rica's Wilmer Lopez in a qualifying match from one to two matches. This makes him ineligible for Mexico's first two group games, against Croatia and Ecuador.

Nigeria

Festus Onigbinde has rung the changes since replacing Shaibu Amodu as national coach in February. After naming a 50-man squad pool that did not include World Cup veterans Sunday Oliseh and Finidi George, Onigbinde called up a number of uncapped players for the game against Paraguay at Loftus Road, London.

For the game against Scotland on April 17, Onigbinde made further changes, calling up Patrick Pascal of Turkish team Altay and Shakhtar Donetsk's Isaac Okoronkwo for the first time.

The appointment of Onigbinde, previously technical director, has attracted criticism because of his lack of experience. Onigbinde's cv includes a spell as coach of Trinidad and Tobago's youth side.

Squad to play Scotland: Goalkeepers: Bankole (Crewe), Ejide (Gabros), Rotimi Sunday (Elkanemi), Inyama (Enyimba). Defenders: Yobo (Marseille), Christopher (Royal Antwerp), Udeze (PAOK Salonika), Babayaro (Chelsea), Okoronkwo (Shakhtar Donetsk), Ifejiagwa (Charlton), Ejiofor (Maccabi Haifa), Shittu (Charlton), Pascal (Altay), Sodje (Crewe), Afolabi (Standard Liege). Midfielders: Okocha (PSG), Lucky Idakhor (Kyiv Dynamo), Kaku (Anderlecht), Ugali, Opabunmi (Shooting Stars), Odenwegie (Insurance), Eze (Julius Berger), Olajengbesi (Julius Berger). Forwards: Kanu (Arsenal), Utaka (Ismaili), Ikedia (Ajax), Akwuegbu (Grazer AK), Ogbeche (PSG), Aghahowa (Shakhtar Donetsk), Baita (Kano Pillars).

Paraguay

Striker Hugo Brizuela will miss the World Cup after damaging knee ligaments while playing for his Mexican club, Pachuca. He faces seven months on the sidelines. The injury leaves Paraguay even more reliant on the strikeforce of Roque Santa Cruz and Jose Cardozo.

Paraguay will play a warm-up game against J.League side Urawa Reds on May 26.

Poland

For the March 27 friendly against Japan, coach Jerzy Engel stuck with the same players who performed so well in World Cup qualifying. But the Poles went down to an unexpected 2-0 defeat.

Some fans expressed their disgust at the Polish performance by throwing missiles, including one firework, at keeper Jerzy Dudek.

Portugal

The 4-1 defeat by Finland in a friendly in Oporto exposed Portugal's limitations. Antonio Oliveira's side were without many key players, including Luis Figo, Rui Costa, Abel Xavier, Rui Jorge and Vitor Baia.

Winger Simao Sabrosa suffered ankle ligament damage in the defeat by the Finns and is likely to miss the World Cup. Striker Ricardo Sa Pinto is also unlikely to recover from a knee injury in time.

Reserve keeper Quim is also likely to miss the finals after he was banned indefinitely following a second positive test for nandrolone.

Republic of Ireland

Crystal Palace striker Clinton Morrison started the match against Denmark at Lansdowne Road and appeared to book his World Cup place after scoring in the 3-0 victory.

Tottenham defender Stephen Carr will miss the World Cup with a knee injury, and the Republic have been left to sweat on the fitness of captain Roy Keane. He injured a hamstring in Manchester United's Champions League quarter-final first leg against Deportivo La Coruna and will be sidelined for six weeks.

Russia

Coach Oleg Romantsev received the backing of the Russian Football Union after a humiliating 2-1 defeat by Estonia in Tallinn. "No matter what, we believe in Oleg Romantsev's ability to lead our team at the World Cup finals," said RFU executive director Alexander Tukmanov.

Against Estonia, Romantsev gave debuts to Lokomotiv Moscow defender Dmitry Sennikov, Kryliya Sovetov midfielder Anton Bober and Zenit striker Alexander Kerzhakov.

Saudi Arabia

The national squad spent March at a training camp in Italy, where they played three friendlies. The first two, against Estonia and Bulgaria 'B', proved disappointing, but the third resulted in a 1-0 win over South Africa, with Nawaf Al-Temyat scoring the goal.

Senegal

Troyes striker Mamadou Niang scored the winning goal on his debut as the Lions beat Bolivia 2-1 in Dakar.

Coach Bruno Metsu, who has been linked with the United Arab Emirates post, has cemented his links with the Senegalese by marrying a local woman, Rokhaya Ndiaye.

Slovenia

The Slovenians played out a 0-0 draw against Croatia in Zagreb on March 27. Afterwards, Zlatko Zahovic criticised the official World Cup ball, the Adidas 'Fevernova', saying: "It's like a balloon. It favours defenders, because you need at least two touches to control the ball."

South Africa

Jomo Sono has been brought in for a second spell as South Africa's national coach. He replaces Carlos Queiroz, who took the rap for South Africa's poor showing at the Nations Cup in Mali.

However, performances have not improved under Sono. Bafana Bafana were beaten 1-0 by Saudi Arabia and, even more embarrassingly, 4-1 by Georgia. They were then held to a goalless draw by Botswana.

Goalkeeper Hans Vonk captained the side against Georgia after Shaun Bartlett, Eric Tinkler and Thabo Mngomeni – all previous captains – were left out by Sono.

South Korea

The Koreans continued their intensive World Cup preparations with three more friendlies in March – a win over

Finland, and goalless draws with Tunisia and Turkey.

Veteran Kashiwa Reysol striker Hwang Sun-hong, preparing to play in his fourth World Cup, provided some response to the accusation that the Koreans lack firepower, scoring both goals in the 2-0 win over Finland.

Spain

Real Madrid forward Raul Gonzalez will captain Spain at the World Cup, replacing his club team-mate Fernando Hierro. Coach Jose Antonio Camacho said: "Now is the time to unleash him. He has done it before and he does it for his team. Now he will do it for the national side."

Spain continued their recent poor record against big-name opposition in friendlies when they were beaten 1-0 by Holland in Rotterdam. Camacho made seven second-half substitutions. Two of these, Deportivo's Diego Tristan and Juan Carlos Valeron, linked well and came close to scoring, but it was Holland's Barcelona defender Frank De Boer who scored the goal.

Sweden

Jesper Blomqvist played his first game for Sweden in three years after being recalled to the squad to play Switzerland. The Everton midfielder was substituted at half-time during the match in Malmo, which finished 1-1.

Tunisia

Henri Michel quit as national coach last month after the sacking of his assistant, fellow Frenchman Albert Rust, by the Tunisian federation. Michel had been under pressure following poor performances at the African Nations Cup in February and a disappointing 0-0 draw with South Korea last month.

The federation appointed local coaches Ammar Souayah and Kemaies Labidi in Rust's place. They took temporary charge of the team following Michel's resignation and were expected to be named as the Frenchman's permanent replacements.

Turkey

The Turks played out a 0-0 draw with South Korea in Bochum, Germany. Coach Senol Gunes fielded an experimental side, having been deprived of a number of key players, including Aston Villa defender Alpay Ozalan.

Resignation...Tunisia's Michel

Internazionale midfielder Emre Belozoglu featured in the starting line-up for the first time for some months, while Ilhan Mansiz, the current top scorer in the Turkish League, played the second half alongside Hakan Sukur.

United States

The US won three games on home soil in the past month, against Honduras, Ecuador and Mexico, but were outplayed by Germany in Rostock, losing 4-2.

After the 1-0 win over Mexico in Denver, courtesy of a Clint Mathis goal, coach Bruce Arena said he was close to finalising his World Cup squad. "I think after the game in Ireland [April 17], we'll be able to make some firm decisions."

Uruguay

Paolo Montero, Sebastian Abreu and Dario Silva have been named in the squad to play Italy on April 17. All three missed last month's defeat in Saudi Arabia. Manchester United striker Diego Forlan, who scored on his debut against the Saudis, kept his place.

The recall of Abreu, who scored both goals in February's 2-1 win over South Korea, was a recognition of his impressive form for Cruz Azul in Mexico, where he is championship top scorer.

Hong Myung-bo

South Korea's indispensable defender prepares for his fourth World Cup

IF EXPERIENCE is the key to stopping South Korea buckling under the weight of the home fans' expectations this summer, then Hong Myung-bo may be the most important weapon in Guus Hiddink's arsenal.

Fourth time lucky?...Hong Myung-bo

At 33 years of age, the Pohang Steelers centre-back has three World Cups under his belt, more than any other Asian, and is still looked up to by supporters and team-mates alike.

Hiddink managed to create something of a local crisis in late 2001 by telling the Korean media that no player – not even Hong – was guaranteed a World Cup squad place.

The least flustered person by all this was Hong himself, but to anyone familiar with the soft-spoken veteran, this is no surprise.

A model professional, Hong's demeanour off the pitch is practically identical to his legendary calmness on the ball. Laid up with a stress fracture for the latter half of last year, he left Kashiwa Reysol, with whom he had become the first ever Korean to captain a J.League club, and returned to Pohang, where his career began.

Having impressed in pre-season friendlies, he was recalled to the national squad, and immediately had several heart-to-heart talks with his head coach.

"I was very impressed with his attitude," Hiddink said. "He told me he didn't want to get in the team based on what he has done in the past, and that he only wanted to play if he was good enough."

What Hong has done in the past has made him a legend in Korea. First called into the national side just before the 1990 World Cup, he has played every minute of Korea's nine finals matches since.

The highlight of his career to date was without doubt USA 94, where despite playing at the back, he netted two of his team's four goals in the tournament. The first came as Korea trailed Spain 2-0 with five minutes to go. A minute from time, Hong slid a pass through for Seo Jung-won to tuck the ball past Jose Canizares, leaving Spain with red faces and Korea with a historic result.

Against Germany 10 days later, Hong scored with a rasping drive as Korea almost staged a repeat performance, going three down and getting back to 3-2.

For Hong and the other scorer in that match, Hwang Sun-hong, 2002 is surely their last World Cup, and neither wants to bow out with another heroic failure.

There was concern that the long injury-induced layoff while Hiddink's team were at such a crucial stage in their development would leave Hong out of touch, but several convincing performances upon his return put paid to any doubts.

With 46 million of his countrymen placing their faith in him more than any other member of the squad, he will not be short of motivation.

"Korea have been to the World Cup, the players have had the experience of what it is to play in it, so they know what the World Cup means," says Hong. "Because of this, they have a really strong determination."

Eoghan Sweeney

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2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA JAPAN

SPAIN Jose Antonio Camacho

'The national side is almost an afterthought'

What do you think of the draw?
With the exception of Argentina and England's group, all the others are very similar, so I can't complain. I'd be selling my players short if I denied that Spain were group favourites, but we won't qualify on name alone. Our goalless draw against Paraguay at the last World Cup meant they qualified for the second stage and we didn't. And we had lots of problems beating Slovenia at Euro 2000.

Who are your key players?
I prefer not to talk about key players. For me the key to our success is that, as a group, my players have the right mental attitude. People talk about Raul, Juan Carlos Valeron and Diego Tristan, but for me all the 23 players are equally important. And I demand the same thing of each one – 100 per cent mind-set on playing for Spain.

Who will be the surprises?
I think the notion of surprise teams at World Cups or European Championships has passed its sell-by date. These days, countries are so evenly matched there really are no easy rivals, and no result is that surprising. As for players, I don't like to single out individuals but Joaquin has been one of the surprises of our League; he's playing so well he has forced his way into my plans.

How will the conditions affect you?
No more than the other sides in our group. I was worried about this factor before the draw, but not now. If we'd drawn an oriental side it would have put us at a disadvantage, but Slovenia, Paraguay and South Africa will all face the same adjustments. What I will say is you're almost guaranteed that 20 per cent of the players will have problems adapting – and you never know who they'll be.

Who will win the World Cup?
I hope Spain do, but my favourites are France and Argentina. Just behind those two I'd put Brazil, Germany and Italy; none of them have been in especially good form but I'm convinced they'll end up where they always do, in the final stages. But even for the favourites, luck is a factor. France were lucky to beat us at Euro 2000, then beat Portugal with a last-gasp penalty and were losing the Final before equalising in the dying seconds. And in the World Cup quarter-finals they only beat Italy in the penalty lottery. So even for a team as strong as France, the margin between success and failure is wafer-thin.

Looking for the right attitude...Camacho

The Spanish League is possibly the strongest in the world. Does that help the national team?
It's not necessarily a good thing because our club sides are reinforced by the very best foreigners; the likes of Rivaldo, Zidane, Figo and Roberto Carlos assume the responsibility for their clubs, yet we have to play against these guys at the World Cup. And the fact that club football in Spain is so strong means the national side is almost an afterthought. In Argentina or France, the international side means everything; here in Spain nobody takes any notice of us until the World Cup finals come around, and then everybody expects us to win it!

But Deportivo and Real Madrid have more Spanish players than ever; surely that's a positive factor?
It's good to see, but it also has negative side-effects. Half my squad at Euro 2000 came to me straight from the Champions League Final between Real Madrid and Valencia. My problem was getting the Madrid players' feet back on the ground after the emotional high of winning, and raising the morale of the Valencia players after their disappointment. What happened? We lost our first game, against Norway. And if

something similar happens this season, I'll have 20 days to prepare guys who've played 60 games.

As a player, you were ever-present for Spain at the World Cup finals in 1982 and 1986. Does that experience help you as a coach?
Being a player is very different to being a coach. The most important thing is that it teaches you how to handle the pressure. If you've been through similar experiences it means you know how the players feel, and that's a big help. But overall, I don't think a coach's playing experience is the most important factor. The mental attitude of the players will determine Spain's possibilities.

Young players like Diego Tristan, Joaquin, Vicente and Puyol have been raising hell in La Liga. What can we expect of them at the World Cup?
You have to strike the right balance, but my track record proves I don't hesitate in the slightest before giving young players their chance. In fact, I always say that the players pick themselves, regardless of age; I just write down the list. The only thing you have to do as coach is try to maintain a stable base. You get so little time to work on tactics, the youngsters need experienced internationals alongside them as a reference.

There does seem to be a lack of young legs in defence. Are you worried that players like Hierro, Nadal and Sergi will struggle?
People are always going on about how old Hierro and Nadal are. All I know is that they're still the best two players in their position. I'm not a club manager signing them long-term, I just want them to be fit and well for the World Cup. I'll admit the centre of defence has become a jinx position. Practically every player we use there – Cesar, Abelardo, Marcelino – gets injured. But as long as Hierro and Nadal maintain their form and attitude, their age doesn't bother me in the slightest. And believe me, rivals would rather face a Spain side without players of their presence.

Interview: Jeff King

SWEDEN Lars Lagerback

'There's no pressure'

What do you think of the draw?
Very difficult. We must play Argentina and England, who must be among the tournament favourites. And let's not forget Nigeria, who have shown glimpses of their vast potential in previous tournaments. It is a big challenge for Sweden. No complaints, though.

Who are your key players?
All the players are important. If we want to succeed in our difficult opening games, we will need all our players at their very best. Besides, we base our game on collective teamwork, not on one or two individuals.

Who will win the World Cup?
France, the holders, should do well again. They have a very experienced team who seem to be able to win even when they are not at their best, which is a precious knack in a gruelling competition. Perhaps the strongest challenge could come from Argentina.

Who will be the surprises?
Hard to say. The opening matches will set the tone for the tournament. We will be much wiser after them. At the moment there are several teams with the potential to spring a surprise. After all, not many predicted that Croatia would finish third in 1998, or that Sweden would win bronze in 1994.

Will the conditions affect you?
No. We're not going out there expecting any problems or unpleasant surprises.

Now that England have a Swedish coach, do you and your co-coach, Tommy Soderberg, see that as an extra problem when you meet them?
Not at all. We met England last autumn and it was just like any other friendly international. Naturally enough, Sven Goran Eriksson knows our style and players inside out. But then again, many Swedish players are currently based in England and play regularly against our future opponents.

How do you rate Argentina?
As one of the best teams in the tournament. They mix South American flair with discipline and good fighting spirit. We have met them only once in the World Cup, in 1934, when we beat them 3-2. A repeat of that would do nicely.

Relishing the challenge...Lagerback

How important is Henrik Larsson to the team's chances?
Henrik is one of Europe's best goalscorers, a Golden Shoe winner, so naturally he is very important to us. But the most important thing is the team and how we work together. It would be wrong to burden Larsson with too high expectations. If he just plays his normal game and the rest of the team pull their weight, we will be more than satisfied.

What do you expect from the referees?
Nothing special. We are sure that they will do a good job. Nobody wants to see brutal fouls or flimsy play-acting.

Are the expectations of the Swedish fans and media realistic?
To be honest, we are not quite sure what they expect. In 1994, a real World Cup fever swept through Sweden. If we can get a couple of good results early on, then who knows what will happen? But at the moment, we don't feel any great pressure.

Interview: Pentti Hietanen

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA JAPAN

TURKEY Senol Gunes

'The quarter-finals are our aim'

What do you think of the draw?
I wanted to take on the favourites – Brazil, Argentina and France – so that if we qualified, nobody could say that Turkey were from the weakest group. Now we are pitted against Brazil, Costa Rica and China. On paper, it looks like an easy group for us to qualify with Brazil. But we must be very careful against China. Their coach, Bora Milutinovic, is the master of the unexpected. Costa Rica are a small country but could be a surprise package. I have great faith in my team and we aim to reach the quarter-finals.

Who are your key players?
Parma's Hakan Sukur is the most accomplished Turkish player of all time and led the team in qualification with six goals. Fenerbahce goalkeeper Rustu Recber played in all 12 qualifiers. Aston Villa defender Alpay Ozalan single-handedly carried Turkey against Macedonia, hitting a hat-trick. Those who appear in the first 11 are my key players.

Who will be the surprises?
Spain and Portugal.

How will the conditions affect you?
They will affect us all, but we will take precautions to minimise it.

Who will win the World Cup?
Argentina, France or Brazil.

What is your preferred formation?
It depends, 4-4-2 or 3-5-2.

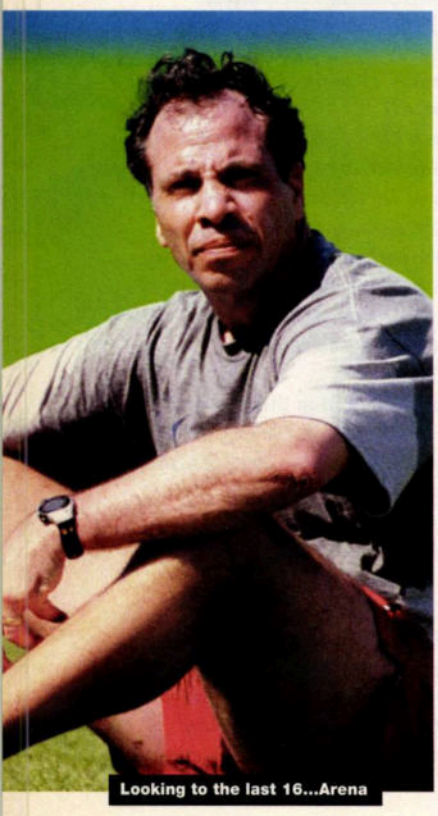
How are your overseas-based players getting on?
Tugay Kerimoglu and Hakan Unsal are doing well at Blackburn. I'm especially pleased with Hakan Unsal, who was unsettled at Galatasaray. In Spain, Tayfun Korkut and Nihat Kahveci of Real Sociedad are our noted players. In Germany, Yildiray Basturk is doing fine with Leverkusen. In Italy, Okan Buruk, Emre Belozoglu of Inter and Umit Davala of Milan remain second choices with their teams. From time to time they are sidelined through injuries and I'm never too sure about their fitness. We recently recalled Mustafa Izzet of Leicester, who had recovered from his injuries. They are our noted players, and we need them very much.

Have injuries affected your ideal formation?
Injuries to top players are the nightmare of any manager. Sergen Yalcin's knee injury has ruled him out of the World Cup, and Alpay is struggling to make it. I heard he had blamed his lay-off on poor medical treatment, and he vowed to return to Turkey for another operation on his ankle. I was without a number of first-choice players for our friendly against Ecuador in Breda. I couldn't afford to risk them.

Will it be tough choosing a final 23?
We will call up a large squad to have a look at as many players as possible. But I may have some problems announcing the final 23 because there are some 35-40 players who could make the squad. Everybody has to show their qualities in the friendly games.

Since 1996, Turkey have struggled to win friendlies. Why?
They have never taken them seriously. – but now it is time to change this attitude. They should also learn to concentrate. In those friendlies the priority was to try out many players and to see if they fitted into our system. This caused a lack of motivation, and so we didn't get the results we expected.

Interview: Hasan Cemali


Looking to the last 16...Arena

UNITED STATES Bruce Arena

'The draw gives us some optimism'

What do you think of the draw?
Fair – no one has an easy draw. Portugal in the eyes of many are one of the top teams. Korea, being hosts, will be difficult to beat. Still, if we play well, we have a chance to advance. We have no complaints – the draw gives us some optimism.

Who are your key players?
Starting at the back, we're strong in goal, with both Kasey Keller and Brad Friedel. At centre-back, there's Jeff Agoos and Eddie Pope. Earnie Stewart, Chris Armas and Claudio Reyna are key in midfield, with Brian McBride up front.

Who will be the surprise teams or players?
I wish I knew the answer to that one. I don't know – I can't tell you. And anyone who tells you he knows is full of it.

How will the conditions affect you?
In this day and age, all teams know exactly how to deal with travel and weather. Heat and humidity are not difficult for us to cope with. Rain could be a problem – but luckily for us, heavy rain is more likely in Japan than in Korea, where we will play.

Who will win the World Cup?
Right now, I'd say Argentina. And France are right up there with them.

That first game, with Portugal as the opponents – do you play defensively?
They're one of the best teams in the world, so it's not going to be easy. But we have to try to win. If you don't score a goal, you won't win. Against Portugal for sure we're not going to attack for 90 minutes – we have to pick our spots and be smart. That's something we've been working on, to be a better counter-attacking team. By June we'll be pretty comfortable getting out on the break.

Will you stick with a 4-4-2 formation – or might you switch sometimes to a 3-5-2?
There's no question about that: we'll play four at the back. Who they are will vary with who's available.

Are you short of depth in the squad?
In most positions – if everyone's

Keeping his faith...Gunes

healthy! – no, we're not. We've got some versatile midfielders – like Landon Donovan – who can also play up front. Maybe in the outside-back positions, we're a bit limited there.

Talking of Donovan – will he be a starter?
There's a chance that he could start a game in the World Cup. He's only 20, but when I compare him to Claudio [Reyna], I think he's well ahead of Claudio at that age.

What's your minimum aim for 2002?
To get into the second round. And to play well. Of course, you can play well and maybe not advance, but hopefully we can do both.

Interview: Paul Gardner

URUGUAY Victor Pua

'Goals depend on whether our gunpowder is wet or dry'

What do you think of the draw?
It's going to be hard, but you can't choose your opponents. Everyone knows France, Denmark did very well in qualification, and we won't be underestimating Senegal, who have some excellent players, many of them based in France.

You stepped up from assistant after the shock resignation of Daniel Passarella. What was your reaction to that?
I really didn't expect Daniel to resign. I have a lot of respect for his decision. I hold him in high regard because he treated me very well, and I consider him a friend.

You were the last team to book your finals place. Did you expect to have to go through the play-off against Australia?
At one point I thought we might go through directly, but the defeat by Venezuela put us in a difficult position. The important thing is that we qualified.

What are the strengths of your team?
During qualification, Uruguay always did well when it mattered, in the key games. I see the side as solid at the back and in midfield. If we score goals or not, it's a case of whether our gunpowder is wet or dry on the day.

Where do you need to improve?
There are always things to be improved. We have a good base, but we need to combine precision with velocity in order to surprise the opposition and create chances.

Is it a problem for you that you have so many players abroad?
The fact that they are with some of the biggest teams in the world is exactly because they're such good players. The Uruguayan public would obviously prefer them to stay to be able to enjoy watching them every week. But the economic differences and the power of these teams make it inevitable that they get transferred.

You have a very young squad. Do you think your side lack experience?
Uruguayan football is in a moment of transition. A new generation is coming through, and the youngsters have done very well. But we have a blend, because the youngsters have the support of four or five more experienced players.

Uruguay have not reached the World Cup finals since 1990. How do you think this year's tournament will be different from the qualification campaign?
One big difference is the fact that in the World Cup you don't have all the stress of either being the home team or the visitors. Now we're on neutral ground, and I'm sure it will be a great football party.

Interview: Tim Vickery

Less stress...Pua

Crisis management

Failure in the Champions League has again sparked talk of the decline of calcio. Paddy Agnew reports

Down and out...Roma's Tommasi takes a tumble over Riise of Liverpool during the Champions League defeat at Anfield

AND THEN there were three. Even as reigning champions Roma crashed out of the Champions League after a 2-0 defeat by Liverpool at Anfield in mid-March, editorial writers were sharpening their pens for an analysis of Italy's third consecutive whitewash in the competition.

Amid the widespread wailing and gnashing of teeth, everyone agreed on one thing – Italian football is in crisis.

Roma's miserable exit was prefaced by an even more abysmal showing by Juventus, who suffered the indignity of going into the last night of their second phase group already eliminated from the tournament.

Even if national coach Giovanni Trapattoni (see page 28) argued defiantly that the quality of Italian football will be underlined at the World Cup finals, others were less kind.

A fundamental criticism both of Roma's inept performance at Anfield and of Italian clubs in general was that they had been far too timid, too negative and defensive away from home. Certainly, had Roma been a little more daring in away games against Galatasaray and Barcelona, they would have been qualified, home and dry, by the time they visited Liverpool.

"We continue to fool ourselves into believing that we are the most astute, the most sophisticated tactically, but we're not the best," wrote *La Repubblica*. "It is the other countries that play a less calculating, more open and generous game. For once and for all, let's admit that the level of our football in European competition has gone badly downhill."

It was ironic that it should be arguably Italy's most brilliant (and certainly most sought-after) coach, Fabio Capello, who finished up in the eye of the storm. Against Liverpool, he opted for a cautious 3-5-2 line-up, which not only isolated and wasted his most talented player, Francesco Totti, but also signalled all too clearly Roma's intent to play for a draw.

One had to marvel at Capello's post-match comment to the effect that he had never seen Liverpool play such an aggressive, attacking game. What did he expect? Did he really think Liverpool would start passing back to the goalkeeper given that it was the last group match, when only a win would be good enough and in front of their own crowd?

"We have not won the Champions League since 1996, and there must be a reason for that," commented *Corriere Dello Sport*. "The doubt remains that our football is overrated, and maybe it's time that we stopped thinking we're the best, no matter what."

The Italian debacle is, of course, relative. Either of the Milan sides, Milan or Internazionale, may well restore some badly-needed honour by winning the UEFA Cup. Furthermore, there is still every reason to believe that Italy will be among the strongest sides at the World Cup finals.

Yet one does suspect that Italian football is now paying a high price for the potentially debilitating nature of many of its endemic qualities. For a start, the pressure on clubs, players and coaches to get winning results and to get them immediately has created a climate of revolving door-style 'hiring and firing'. This means that few coaches and almost as few players get to stay with the same club long enough to create a viable team.

While Sir Alex Ferguson is in his 17th season with Manchester United, Arsene Wenger in his eighth with Arsenal and Gerard Houllier in his fourth with Liverpool, Capello is in only his third with Roma, while Marcello Lippi, Carlo Ancelotti and Hector Cuper are all in their first with Juventus, Milan and Inter respectively.

All the five clubs that finished immediately below Roma last season (Juventus, Lazio, Parma, Inter, Milan) either changed coach last summer or early this season. In Italian football, it seems, only one coach is not a failure.

In such a climate, long-term planning goes out the window. In such a climate, it is difficult to build a team since one coach's favourite players are likely to find themselves on the bench with the next coach. The rapid comings and goings of big-name players have hardly helped. These transfers are often made for sound financial reasons, but they make little sense in footballing terms.

On top of that, the exaggerated use of 'team turnover', established by Capello in the early 1990s with Milan, seems to have badly affected clubs such as Lazio, Parma and Milan. The days when you could name the team off the top of your head are gone.

While it might be pointed out, correctly, that many of the same problems afflict English, German and Spanish football, they have wreaked more damage in the peculiar context of Italian football – played out against the background of a seemingly unremitting series of nandrolone, passport, match-fixing or refereeing scandals.

Not for nothing have men like Milan acting president Adriano Galliani and Lazio boss Sergio Cragnotti proposed a series of League reforms that range from a salary cap to some form of fixity of player tenure with a club. Even if, for the time being, such concepts will prove difficult to realise, they indicate something of the way certain *eminence grises* are thinking.

If Roma provided the most disappointing note of the season so far, they also featured in possibly the single most significant Serie A match of the season. Just five days after their Champions League exit, they were beaten 3-1 by Inter at the San Siro in a top-of-the-table clash.

The champions did at least make a match of it with Inter, and it required a vintage performance from Uruguayan Alvaro Recoba (see profile, right) to see them off. Recoba used his searing pace to score the first Inter goal, his brilliant passing to set up the second for Christian Vieri, and his marksmanship to wrap up the result with a spectacular free-kick.

With Juventus waving goodbye to the title contest by losing 1-0 to Parma and drawing 1-1 with Lazio in successive matches in late March, the Serie A battle by early April had clearly become a two-horse race between Inter and Roma. Inter were in the happy position of knowing that their destiny is in their own hands, given the three-point lead they took over Roma in that direct clash, just six games from the end of the season.

Inter's win came just two days after they had pulled off one of the surprise results of the season when defeating Valencia 1-0 away in the second leg of their UEFA Cup quarter-final tie. Missing from this sustained Inter run was their most famous player, Brazilian Ronaldo. In fact, he had to wait for a call-up from national coach Luiz Felipe Scolari for a March 27 friendly with Yugoslavia in order to get a first taste of competitive action for more than three months.

Given that Inter's Argentinian coach Hector Cuper finally seems to have discovered his strongest team (it features Toldo, Materazzi, Cordoba and Javier Zanetti in defence, Di Biagio, Cristiano Zanetti and Seedorf in midfield, with Recoba and Vieri in attack), it may be that Ronaldo will have to endure some more sideline frustration. Cuper, unlike Capello in the early 1990s, is unlikely to want to change a winning team.

Lest there be any doubt about Cuper's own reservations re Ronaldo, he spelt them out loud and clear on Italian radio during a celebratory chat in the wake of that 3-1 win over Roma. "Ronaldo is worried not about the immediate future but about the future, full stop," said Cuper. "Apart from three or four games, he hasn't played for the past three years. The problem is that he is not 100 per cent fit, not fit enough to play consistently either for his country or for Inter."

Lest anyone fails to get the point, Cuper explained just how and why his side have done well without Ronaldo. "My Inter are now a real team," he said. "The skill and ability of class players are important but they don't always swing a match your way. Which is why the solidity of the team group becomes important. I know that Ronaldo is a very important player on the world scene, but I feel players like him should think in terms of the team."

Perhaps, by mid-May, both in Europe and in Serie A, the 'real' Inter will have restored a badly-needed element of credibility to Italian soccer.

Almost there...Inter players celebrate after their crucial Serie A win over Roma

Pro-file Alvaro Recoba

Uruguayan 'Chinaman' inspiring Inter's bid for the title

ALVARO RECOBA is the Uruguayan 'Chinaman' who has emerged from Italy's forged passports scandal to establish himself as a key man with club – Internazionale – and country just when it matters most.

First, the attacking midfielder guided Uruguay to the World Cup finals. He then struck the goals that fired Inter within sight of the double of UEFA Cup and Italian League. He signed off his finest performance in Serie A by scoring twice and making a third in Inter's potentially crucial 3-1 victory over champions and title chasers Roma.

"I could not have asked for more," said 26-year-old Recoba as he was swamped beneath the congratulations of team-mates, coaches, directors, friends and reporters. "I believed we would win but I never expected I would have the opportunity to make the difference. Now it makes all the effort to stay here worthwhile."

Not so long ago Recoba was far from certain that his career lay in Italy. He was among 24 players found to have been playing as a European Union citizen when the paperwork had been forged. A long court case was finally resolved with Recoba being banned for two months last autumn.

It could have been worse. At one stage Inter's lawyers warned the suspension could be for as long as two years. Inter had even started exploring the possibility of selling Recoba abroad; a range of clubs from Manchester United to Malaga were listed as possible destinations. "I never wanted to go anywhere else," says Recoba. "What happened was not my fault. As far as I was concerned I was innocent because I left all the details to other people. You cannot concentrate on football and keep on top of all the formalities."

Nicknamed 'the Chinaman' because of his looks, Recoba made his name with modest Uruguayan club Danubio in 1994. Two years later, after scoring 32 goals in 31 League games and by then an international, he was signed by former world and South American champions Nacional. Eighteen months later he was on his way to Inter for £7 million. Recoba's arrival scarcely made waves since he was signed just as big-spending president Massimo Moratti was also splashing out on Ronaldo. But the Uruguayan has now played more games for Inter than the injury-dogged Brazilian.

He has outstripped Ronaldo despite having had few opportunities to shine in his first two seasons in Milan. Recoba made a notable debut – scoring twice as a 70th-minute substitute to turn a likely 1-0 defeat by Brescia into a 2-1 victory. But then coach Gigi Simoni was not as impressed as the fans. Thus Recoba played only eight times more in Serie A in his first 18 months and was loaned to Venezia. There he found his Italian feet, scoring 11 goals in 19 games and earning a recall to headquarters, where he has thrived under new boss Hector Cuper.

Keir Radnedge

Power games

It's a case of an irresistible force meeting an immovable object. Jeff King on the season's closing stages

Tied up...Guti of Real Madrid vies with Barça's Xavi during the 1-1 League draw

AFTER months of gridlock at the summit, the Spanish title race is shaping up into a straight fight between the country's most fluent attack and its most unbending defence.

With six games to play, Real Madrid and Valencia were separated only by goal difference. On paper at least, Deportivo and Celta are still in with a shout, though the Galician duo are now very much dependent on third party good turns.

Unfortunately for the north-west challenge, few Spanish clubs are in the mood for charity. Only mid-table Espanyol and Valladolid face the run-in with nothing more tangible than end-of-season honour to play for. The Liga's other 18 clubs are either playing for the title, chasing a place in the Champions League/UEFA Cup or immersed in a relegation dog-fight.

"Mourning only lasts one day at this club," insisted Real Madrid sports director Jorge Valdano after his side's potentially demoralising Cup Final defeat by Depor. The players responded to his message with three wins and a draw in their next four League matches. However, the odd game out was a definite case of what might have been.

Zinedine Zidane's goal at Camp Nou should have been the prelude to Madrid's first triumph in the arch-enemy's den since 1983. Instead, they let a hapless Barcelona off the hook before Cesar fumbled Xavi's prosaic effort from outside the box to hand the Catalans a draw. Not surprisingly, the keeper's blunder did nothing to silence the debate opened by coach Vicente Del Bosque's decision to drop Iker Casillas for the run-in.

Real Madrid's title prospects depend to a considerable degree on the ability of Real Sociedad (who took seven points from their first three games after John Toshack's sacking) and Mallorca to wave goodbye to the relegation zone before meeting Del Bosque's side. With Tenerife looking certs for the drop, Rayo cursing their luck with referees and Zaragoza and Osasuna both in freefall, Madrid could indeed get lucky before their last-day showdown at Deportivo.

Valencia's title challenge suffered a body blow with injuries to Roberto Ayala and Mauricio Pellegrino. "It's up to me and Carlos Marchena to win the League now," responded Miroslav Djukic to news that the Argentinian duo will miss most, if not all, of the *Ches*' run-in. "We'll even move in together if it helps us form a better partnership."

The veteran Djukic and Spanish Under-21 Marchena aren't exactly The Odd Couple, but they'd have to be married for decades to complement each other as well as Ayala and Pellegrino.

With his rear axis in the repair shop, coach Rafa Benitez needs his forwards to step up a gear. Thirty-nine goals in 32 League games is a risible strikerate for title contenders. Benitez's lack of faith in his theoretical goalscorers was evident when he fielded a team with no genuine forwards at Tenerife. With Juan Sanchez, John Carew, Mista and Salva clicking their heels on the bench, midfielder Miguel Angulo cut a lonely furrow in attack. Valencia spent most of the game parked in Tenerife's box before a long-range missile from Pablo Aimar secured a last-gasp 1-0 victory.

The fact that 11 of Valencia's 16 wins have been by the odd goal reflects their problems breaking down sides who set their stall out to defend. Either side of the 1-0 UEFA Cup defeat against Internazionale, Benitez's side lost 2-1 at Rayo and beat Osasuna by the same score. Rayo successfully defended their lead for 25 minutes after defender Pablo Sanz was sent off. Osasuna were reduced to 10 men after just 29 minutes, yet Ruben Baraja didn't manage Valencia's winner until injury time.

On the evidence of three sublime performances against Juventus, Real Madrid and Arsenal, Deportivo would be unbeatable if football was a game played over 60 minutes. The fact that several of their key players – the frail Juan Carlos Valeron, the pedestrian Fran and the artistic but heavy-legged Diego Tristan – are distinctly average athletes opens a second-half window of opportunity for the rest.

After spending most of the season rotating, coach Javier Irureta has clearly decided on his best 11. Given that he will want to field his Cup-winning line-up in Champions League fixtures, the longevity of Depor's domestic challenge depends on whether or not their European commitments were ended by Manchester United.

Three days after the Spanish Cup Final, Irureta made eight changes to his starting line-up, and Depor only drew against lowly Rayo. They then dropped two more points against Real Sociedad.

The likes of Roy Makaay and Djalminha were automatic starters in the title-winning side of 2000. Irureta needs them to swallow their pride and be equally influential as stand-ins. Depor's run-in certainly isn't for the faint-hearted. Before that final day showdown against Real Madrid, they travel to Valencia and Betis.

Alone up front...Valencia's Angulo (left) played as the sole striker against Tenerife

Celta may be the only one of the four contenders who have never won the League, but they refuse to go away quietly. Injuries to Eduardo Berizzo, Fernando Caceres and Juan Velasco may have played havoc with their defensive shape, but only Real Madrid are scoring more goals. Catanha ended a two-month drought with six goals in four games in March, while midfielder Vagner is banging in goals from improbable distances.

"Now we've accelerated, we're capable of winning every remaining game," said coach Victor Fernandez after his side's emphatic 6-1 win at Athletic Bilbao. Celta then made it four straight wins by beating Alaves 3-1.

Barring a debacle of biblical proportions above them, Barcelona are out of the running. "We have to forget the title and concentrate on making the top four," said Javier Saviola after a 1-1 draw against Las Palmas left Barça eight points off the pace. "It won't be easy because the five teams above us are all in great form." Among them a Betis side who were unbeaten in 13 games going into April.

Most of Barça's problems (a badly designed squad, tactical chaos, woeful inconsistency) have been of their own making. But, in fairness, injuries have deprived them of their two key players for significant periods. In four previous seasons at Camp Nou, Rivaldo averaged 20 League goals. This season he limped through just 17 appearances before April, scoring seven times. Patrik Andersson, the imposing defender Barça have lacked for so long, has managed only 40 minutes since December.

At least Catalan fortunes seem to be turning in Europe. Not only was Luis Enrique's offside winner at Galatasaray the difference between Barça topping their group and going out, but it also set up a quarter-final against Panathinaikos. "We've been lucky," said coach Carles Rexach, "that was the draw we all wanted."

For the third year running, Spain boasted three teams in the Champions League quarter-finals. History suggests the destination of the League title depends on what happens in Europe. In 1999-00 Depor slipped past Champions League semi-finalists Real Madrid, Valencia and Barcelona to clinch their first ever championship.

"Playing every three days might not qualify as inhuman," says Vicente Del Bosque of the European factor, "but it's extremely burdensome."

According to Valencia's Djukic, it's not just about tired legs. "The psychological wear and tear Real Madrid and Depor face in the Champions League could make all the difference in the League," he says.

Valencia's run-in is free of midweek commitments, and with three of their last four games at Mestalla, almost travel-free. By contrast, the Madrid players have had to get their heads around two midweek clashes against Bayern Munich, a side they've lost to five out of six times over the past two years.

If by the time this issue reaches you Madrid and Barça have won their quarter-final ties, they now meet in the European Cup for the first time in 42 years. The pressure to concentrate on what Del Bosque describes as "a semi-final civil war I can do without" at the expense of all else would be enormous.

If Spain's Big Two are set to line-up for a fratricidal duel in Europe, expect Valencia, or maybe even Celta, to sneak through and grab the honours on the home front. If, on the other hand, Real Madrid have fallen foul of Bayern again, expect them to ensure their centenary year doesn't become a total flop by winning the League.

HOW THEY FINISH
THE RUN-IN FOR THE LIGA CONTENDERS

REAL MADRID: Osasuna (a), Tenerife (h), Real Sociedad (a), Mallorca (h), Deportivo (a).

VALENCIA: Mallorca (a), Deportivo (h), Espanyol (h), Malaga (a), Betis (h).

DEPORTIVO: Espanyol (h), Valencia (a), Malaga (h), Betis (a), Real Madrid (h).

CELTA: Villarreal (a), Barcelona (h), Zaragoza (a), Sevilla (h), Rayo (a).

Pro-file Joaquin

Betis youngster winging his way to the World Cup

EVEN die-hard Betis fans would admit their club is ill-equipped to compete with the economic might of Real Madrid and Barcelona. But in one respect Spain's surprise package are anything but poor relations – no team in La Liga boasts a one-two punch from the flanks comparable to that of Denilson and Joaquin.

Five years after Betis paid Sao Paulo a world record £21.5million for Denilson, the Brazilian left-winger is finally living up to his billing. It says everything about Joaquin's dazzling form on the opposite flank that the only fate worse than playing against Betis at right-back is playing against them at left-back.

The attacking midfielder has been tormenting Spanish defences all season, and at just 20, is the talisman of a home-grown brat pack that also boasts Capi, Dani, Rivas, Juanito and Varela under coach Juande Ramos. "He dribbles like a Brazilian," purrs Denilson, while legendary Betis and Real Madrid flanker Rafael Gordillo says: "Joaquin has everything it takes to surpass the Beckhams and Figos. His dribbling skills mean he can get past defenders and, just as importantly, his speed means he can get away from them. Then he's got the vision to choose the right option in a split-second and deliver a pinpoint cross. This kid is scandalously good."

The kid first caught the eye as Betis won the 1999 Spanish Youth Cup. After their 4-0 win at Camp Nou in the semi-final, then Barça coach Louis Van Gaal sought out Joaquin to offer his congratulations. In the Final, Betis beat Real Madrid. How Spain's Big Two must wish they'd moved in on the youngster then. Joaquin's present contract runs until 2006, but Betis president Manuel Ruiz de Lopera is anxious to double the youngster's £36.5m escape clause, just in case.

Last season, Joaquin stepped into the shoes of crowd favourite Finidi George as Betis escaped the Second Division at the first attempt. His meteoric rise continued with an impressive Spain debut against Portugal after just 23 top-flight games. Now, it would be a major surprise if Jose Camacho doesn't take Joaquin to the World Cup.

His boyish enthusiasm alone would be a boost. "I slept in Figo's shirt after the Portugal game," he says of his debut souvenir. "Three days ago I was watching Spain from my sofa, so just having breakfast alongside so many great players was amazing."

Before the World Cup there's the little matter of Betis' surprise title challenge. The championship itself is probably out of the question for the Andalucians, but if Joaquin and Denilson continue to torture full-backs, a top-four finish and Champions League qualification is a distinct possibility.

Jeff King

Fact file

Club Betis
Country Spain
Born July 21, 1981, in El Puerto de Santa Maria
International debut February 2002, v Portugal
International caps 2 (0 goals)

Koln face the drop

The once great Rhineland club have had a disastrous campaign, writes Nick Bidwell

KOLN, sure-fire certainties to be relegated from the Bundesliga at the end of this season, are living proof that even the most prestigious clubs can fall on hard times.

The club's late, great founding president, Franz Kremer, would be in despair if still around today. His leadership and ideas paved the way for Koln to emerge as one of the dominant forces in German football throughout the 1960s, 70s and 80s.

During that period, the club won three national championships – including the first Bundesliga title in 1963-64 – and produced such international stars as Wolfgang Overath, Karl Heinz Schnellinger, Pierre Littbarski, Toni Schumacher and Thomas Hassler.

The golden days are clearly over now, though. No Koln player has been picked for Germany since striker Bruno Labaddia was given a rare run-out in 1995, and the team are poised for their second relegation from the top flight in four years.

It is hard to believe everyone at Koln was so upbeat as they lined up on the starting grid last summer. After regaining their First Division status in 2000, a side based largely on homegrown talent won many friends with the attractive football that brought them a 10th-place Bundesliga finish in 2000-01. The expectation at the Mungersdorfer Stadion was that they would push on for European qualification this term.

However, the campaign has been a disaster. With sloppy defending becoming the norm, players falling out with coach Ewald Lienen and star forward Christian Timm often confined to the stands with hip and groin injuries, Koln slid into the drop zone.

Lienen was fired in January, and, given the chaos at the club, it was perhaps not surprising that big-name coaches such as Frank Pagelsdorf, Jurgen Rober and former Koln boss Christoph Daum declined the chance to take over the reins.

Finally, the poisoned chalice was handed to Friedhelm Funkel, who had been fired by Hansa Rostock earlier in the season. But, predictably, there has been no tangible improvement. Mid-season recruits such as defenders Marc Zellweger (from St Gallen) and Rigobert Song (West Ham, see profile opposite), and French striker Lilian Laslandes (Sunderland), have proved unable to stop the rot, and Koln are still incredibly shot-shy. Indeed, they recently set a Bundesliga record by going 1,034 minutes without a goal.

"The harsh truth is that we are simply not good enough or experienced enough to play in the Bundesliga," said skipper Dirk Lottner, while chairman Albert Caspers agreed that the game was already up. "We have started to make plans for competing in the Second Division," he said. "We will have to slash our budget by at least a half."

Koln are not even the top team in Rhineland these days. For the past decade, they have had to play second fiddle to Bayer Leverkusen, and the current regional hierarchy was respected when the pair met in the German Cup semi-finals. Leverkusen, who are still in the hunt for this season's Bundesliga title, won 3-1 thanks to extra-time goals from Croat defender Boris Zivkovic and midfielder Bernd Schneider.

They will face holders Schalke in the Final in Berlin on May 11 after the Ruhr valley club triumphed 2-0 at home over Bayern Munich in the other semi. Extra time was needed here, too, with Marco Van Hoogdalem and Jorg Bohme putting Schalke through.

The turning point came in the last minute of normal time when Bayern's Ghanaian stopper, Sammy Kuffour, was sent off. Not content with making a terrible challenge on Bohme, Kuffour then went to butt his victim. He could not have had any complaints with the German disciplinary committee's decision to ban him for six games.

Kuffour's antics, sadly, have not been an isolated example of violence in the German game. Bayern were certainly on the receiving end in a goalless Bundesliga draw at Kaiserslautern recently. Fired up by a baying full house at the Betzenberg and by the pre-match claims of *Lauterer* star Mario Basler that referees always favoured the *Munchner*, Kaiserslautern players repeatedly confused tackling with common assault.

Feelings were running so high on the Bayern bench that general manager Uli Hoeness rushed to the home team dug-out for a verbal volley at opposition coach Andy Brehme.

To cap an unsavoury afternoon, Bayern midfielder Thorsten Fink had a beer thrown over him after the game. So it was little wonder that the Bavarian club's president, Franz Beckenbauer, had plenty to say about the bear-pit atmosphere his team had encountered.

"This match had nothing to do with football," he said. "Their players did not kick the ball but the legs of our team. They could have been sidelined for six months with broken legs."

Kaiserslautern have not received the best press of late. Last month, Egypt defender Hany Ramzy was handed an eight-month suspended sentence for sexually harassing a 20-year-old girl in a restaurant. Anxious not to be seen to be condoning Ramzy's bad behaviour, his club's board immediately sacked him. However, after the unnamed girl made a plea on Ramzy's behalf, he was reinstated. A lucky man, indeed.

Shattered...Koln players contemplate their exit from the German Cup at the hands of Bayer Leverkusen

PSG win without Fernandez

Stranger in the night...Ronaldinho has cut a forlorn figure in recent weeks

PERHAPS it was premature to start ringing the knell for Paris Saint-Germain. Some in the media had done this after a League Cup defeat by Bordeaux and a French Cup defeat by Lorient were compounded by the suspension for six months of their volatile manager, Luis Fernandez.

He was banned by the federation's disciplinary committee for his behaviour following the defeat by Bordeaux. Fernandez had ranted at the match officials immediately after the game and even blocked their cars in the car park so he could assail them, verbally, again as they attempted to leave.

However, subsequent victories over Troyes and Guingamp suggested the coach's banishment may not be such a bad thing! More importantly, the wins lifted PSG to third in the table, raising the possibility of a lucrative Champions League spot for the side, who have been suffering financially.

Even so, for all the team's individual quality, they still appear to play as strangers to one another. Even Ronaldinho, who seemed at last to be entering a productive spell, has lately looked a forlorn figure.

Yvon Pouliquen may well be experiencing a case of deja vu. Last season he was in charge of Strasbourg, who were relegated but contrived to win the French Cup.

This season he has taken over at Lorient, who have managed to reach the League Cup Final and the French Cup semis yet were bottom of the First Division with four games to play.

As we know, Pouliquen stepped in when the Argentinian coach Angel Marcos left for Nantes in mid-season. This was a perplexing appointment given that Lorient were struggling to avoid relegation, and Marcos hardly left Lorient trailing clouds of glory.

Lorient forward Jean-Claude Darcheville is well up among the League top scorers, despite his team's poor form. "Things are becoming hard," says the 26-year-old, known as Pit Bull. "For six months I have been at this level – I score, I run, and it becomes exhausting because Lorient are involved in so many competitions."

What comforts Darcheville, he says, is when Lorient win. Which is in no small measure thanks to himself.

Andre Duclos

Pro-file Rigobert Song

Cameroon captain eyeing move to Bayern and World Cup glory

CAMEROON and Koln central defender Rigobert Song continues to lead a double sporting life. While he has enjoyed success a-plenty in the international arena, skippering the Indomitable Lions to victory at the 2000 and 2002 African Nations Cup, he has rarely found club football as rewarding.

Indeed, apart from an outstanding four-year spell at French club Metz (1994-98), Song could be excused for thinking he had been cursed in his choice of clubs.

Both in Italy with Salernitana and Liverpool, he was quickly catalogued as error-prone, and it was the same story following a £2.5million move to West Ham in November 2000.

No one at Upton Park questioned Song's commitment or athleticism. But far too often he cost his club goals with blunders. Last autumn, Hammers boss Glenn Roeder had little choice but to drop him.

Song complained Roeder had treated him shabbily and that he had suffered from unfair comparisons with Rio Ferdinand, the man he had replaced. But more important than settling scores was the need for regular first-team football in a World Cup season. Thus, he agreed to move on loan to struggling Bundesliga side Koln.

In Germany he has performed ably, cutting out the positional mistakes that plagued his time in the Premiership. However, his club hoodoo remains, since Koln seem doomed to relegation.

The Cameroonian has already made it clear he will not stay on at Koln beyond the end of the season, and no wonder with Bayern Munich reported to admire his aggressive marking, comfort on the ball and relatively cheap £3million price-tag. "It would be great to join Bayern," said Song recently. "What more could a professional want. I'd be delighted to go there and play for honours every week."

Talking of trophies, the Cameroon captain believes his nation could be serious contenders for the World Cup this summer. "If the luck is on our side, we have a chance to become world champions," he says. "We have improved constantly under our new coach, Winfried Schafer, and we have a young squad that has played together for years.

"Our win at the African Nations Cup was the best preparation we could have had. We know we're strong and that the best-ever Cameroon side will be at the World Cup."

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club Koln (Ger)
Country Cameroon
Born July 1, 1976, in Nkanglicock
Previous clubs Tonnerre Yaounde, Metz (Fra), Salernitana (Ita), Liverpool (Eng), West Ham (Eng)
International debut June 1994, v Brazil
International caps 65 (2 goals)
Honours African Nations Cup 2000, 2002; French League Cup 1996

Dark days ahead

The collapse of ITV Digital could spell disaster for some Football League clubs, says Gavin Hamilton

Flying high...Emile Heskey outjumps Roma's Aldair to seal Liverpool's 2-0 win

MANY of the Football League's 72 clubs face an uncertain future following the collapse of pay-TV operator ITV Digital.

The clubs face a legal battle to recoup all or part of the remaining money owed to them as part of ITV Digital's three-year deal with the Football League. The deal has two years left to run, with ITV Digital still owing the clubs £178 million, due in two instalments in August 2002 and August 2003.

ITV companies Granada and Carlton, owners of ITV Digital, offered the clubs a reduced payment of £50m shortly before their subsidiary went into administration last month. The clubs insist ITV Digital must make the first payment of £89m in August but are prepared to negotiate on the second.

Many clubs have already spent the money from the ITV Digital deal on player transfers and contracts. Without the money (£3m, £400,000 and £200,000 a year for First, Second and Third Division clubs respectively), they will be forced to cancel player contracts and slash wages.

Paul Scally, chairman of Gillingham, one of the First Division's smaller clubs, summed up the predicament of many clubs when he said: "I've had hardly any sleep for two weeks. I've been wondering where I will be able to take my club after August. Our turnover is £7.5m, so this ITV money is 40 per cent of that."

The clubs are threatening to take out a £500m lawsuit, targeting the assets of Granada and Carlton, who pumped £80m into the ITV Digital venture. This began as ONdigital and was intended as a terrestrial digital rival to Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB.

The £315m deal was struck by the Football League in June 2000, a few days after BSkyB re-secured the rights to the Premiership and the BBC won the FA Cup rights back from ITV.

ITV Digital, having missed out on the Premiership and FA Cup but knowing they had to offer live football to sell subscriptions, paid well over the odds for the Football League rights. That has been borne out by the viewing figures, with some games attracting audiences of less than 1,000.

While the health of the English game may be threatened by the ITV Digital fiasco, at least things are rosier at the top, with Manchester United and Liverpool both qualifying for the Champions League quarter-finals.

For Liverpool, who reached the knockout stage after a thrilling 2-0 win over Roma, their success coincided with the return of manager Gerard Houllier to the bench following his much-publicised health problems.

Arsenal, by contrast, failed to progress from the second stage, paying the price for some poor results away from home. The consolation for Arsene Wenger's side was that the League and Cup double is still on.

Arsenal beat Newcastle 3-0 in their FA Cup quarter-final replay to set up a semi-final against Middlesbrough. Easter weekend wins over Sunderland and Charlton took Wenger's side to the top of the Premiership, with a game in hand over both United and Liverpool going into the closing stages of what has been the most open and exciting League contest for many years.

At the other end, Leicester look doomed, as do Derby, despite the best efforts of former Aston Villa manager John Gregory. They are likely to be joined by one from Ipswich, Bolton, Blackburn and Fulham. Jean Tigana, who has guided Fulham to the FA Cup semi-finals (where they face Chelsea) has so far refused to refine his team's elegant style – and they face being drawn into a relegation fight.

Everton look like avoiding such a battle, having sacked manager Walter Smith and replaced him with the highly-rated David Moyes, who came to prominence at Preston. Everton won three of their first four games under Moyes to creep towards safety.

Kenneth Wolstenholme

WATCHING football on television today, when many commentators appear to feel their duty is to invade the space between picture and viewer, must make it all the more difficult for a younger generation to understand the command of Kenneth Wolstenholme. 'Command' was the operative word since he joined the BBC in the late 1940s after four years and 100 missions as an RAF bomber pilot, some of them with the noted Pathfinder squadron.

From 1948 until 1971, Wolstenholme provided the verbal context for a series of defining matches while remaining semi-anonymous. In those days the commentator did precisely that; he did not bounce out from the little box in the stadium roof to present quiz programmes or front advertising campaigns. Indeed, many listeners probably first saw Wolstenholme's face in the photograph that adorned his monthly column in the early years of *World Soccer*. He provided authoritative opinions, as shown, right, in the January 1961 issue.

Wolstenholme, who has died at 81, felt the current commentating crop talk too much; for him, the art of the job was to complement the action being projected into the country's living-rooms. It is appropriate, then, that his legendary comment at the end of the 1966 World Cup Final should have been "some people are on the pitch, they think it's all over – it is now!" No tedious statistic about Geoff Hurst scoring the first hat-trick in World Cup Final history. The emotion of the moment was paramount.

The Matthews Cup Final and England's Wembley thrashing by Hungary, both in 1953, along with the 1960 Champions Cup Final, were other Wolstenholme milestones. He commentated 'live' on more than 2,000 matches, including 23 FA Cup Finals, 16 European Cup Finals and five World Cups. He, more than anyone, brought verbal colour to black-and-white televised soccer.

Keir Radnedge

KENNETH WOLSTENHOLME

England's most-travelled television commentator and soccer-writer offers his views on Spain's football finances

TRAVELLING the world on the international soccer circuit teaches you more than to know how to read the "A.B.C. World Airways Guide" and to know that even an opened bottle of orgeat is subject to import duty.

It teaches you to realise that while the English argue about £20 a week and £4 bonuses (not forgetting, of course, the Provident Fund), the rest of European Soccer is wrapped up in thick wads of currency notes.

Take for example, the recent European Cup tie between Barcelona and Real Madrid. With no much of strike as a game between Europe's undisputed No. 1 and No. 2 (and despite the omission of the tie 1 will rate Real No. 1), the players were on a bonus of £200 each to win—and that meant £100 for each leg of the tie.

When Barcelona drew 2-2 in the first leg in Madrid (albeit thanks to a lucky penalty three minutes from the end), the second leg assumed even greater importance. The Brazilian defeat of Real Madrid in the European Cup was more than a possibility.

If an English club had been concerned, there would have been no discussion in the bonus. In England the players receive as much for beating a Fourth Division side as they do for defeating

EUROPEAN LEAGUE IS A NECESSITY

SCOTLAND

McLeish lands first silverware

RANGERS won the CIS League Cup, beating Ayr United 4-0 in the Final, to give manager Alex McLeish his first taste of domestic silverware since replacing Dick Advocaat mid-season.

McLeish's men enjoyed a facile stroll to victory over the First Division side in the Hampden Park sunshine, with veteran Argentinian Claudio Caniggia scoring twice.

Nevertheless, it has been a remarkable season for Ayr, who had never been to a major Cup Final before and whose fans were calling for the head of manager Gordon Dalziel mid-term. Since then the club have climbed to third place in their division, reached the CIS Cup Final and battled into the semi-finals of the Scottish Cup.

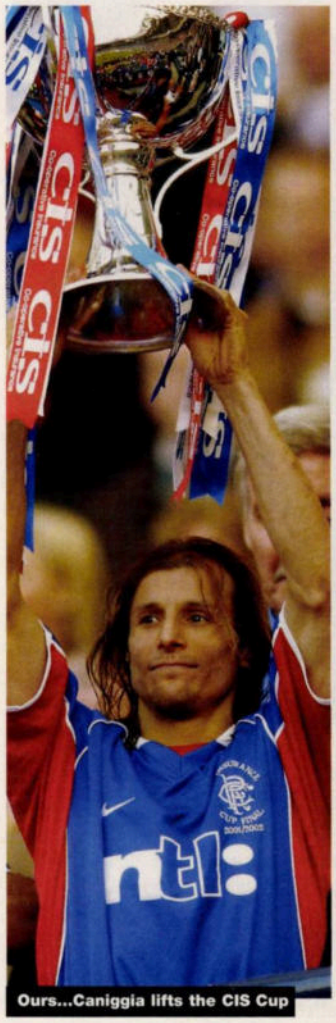
Dalziel won the CIS Cup as a player, when helping Raith to victory over Celtic in 1994. However, the Parkhead side put Ayr out of this year's Scottish Cup, winning 3-0, again at Hampden. This kept Celtic on course for the Double, since they were almost assured of the League championship with five games to play.

In the Final, Martin O'Neill's side will meet Rangers, 3-0 vanquishers of Partick, who were appearing in the semi-finals for the first time in 20 years. Now they can refocus their efforts on securing top spot in the First Division, where they are in a straight battle with Airdrie for the one promotion place.

With St Johnstone almost certain to go down from the Premier Division, the only unresolved issue in the top flight is who takes third place behind Celtic and Rangers to win a UEFA Cup place. Newcomers Livingston, in third spot for so long this season, have suffered the jitters in recent weeks and now must slug it out with a rejuvenated Aberdeen.

Newly-appointed national team manager Berti Vogts has already made his presence felt by persuading Celtic midfielder Paul Lambert to reverse his decision to retire from international football. Vogts, however, has been unable to elicit the same reaction from Everton striker Duncan Ferguson, whose disagreements with the SFA have kept him out of the frame for a number of years.

Alan Fairley



Ours...Caniggia lifts the CIS Cup

WALES

Barry face Bangor battle

BANGOR CITY threatened to take the title race all the way to the last game after winning three matches in a week over the Easter period.

Although defending champions Barry Town led by three points going into April, Bangor had a game in hand.

The top two also seemed likely to slug it out in the Welsh Cup Final having been drawn apart to meet more modest opposition in the semis. Barry were taking on Southern section promotion challengers Ton Pentre, while Bangor faced Flexsys Cefn Druids.

Rhayader Town, Oswestry Town, Llanelli and Haverfordwest County are the four teams involved in the top division's relegation battle.

The scoring exploits of Bangor striker Marc Lloyd-Williams have continued. He hit the headlines again when bagging five in a 7-2 League win away to Druids, helping to increase his tally to 38 goals in just 28 games.

Mel Thomas

N IRELAND

McFall signs up for more

THESE are heady times for Portadown and in particular for manager Ronnie McFall. With his team top of the League, the 54-year-old – already the longest-serving manager in the Irish League after 14 seasons in charge – has been awarded a contract that will keep him at Shamrock Park until 2006.

Veteran goalkeeper Mickey Keenan, just eight years younger than McFall, has been a major factor in Portadown's success this season. Despite turning 46 at the beginning of April, he is currently the best keeper in the domestic game and is also now on course to take the Double.

Portadown reached the semi-finals of the Irish Cup, where they were set to face Coleraine, by beating Glentoran 4-3 in a superb quarter-final replay.

In the other semi, amateur league side Killyleagh Youth Club were paired with Linfield. Killyleagh are the fairytale side of the competition, having battled through from the preliminary rounds and defeated First Division sides Larne and Ballyclare Comrades on the way.

Roy Kitson

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Pro clubs in financial straits

Klaas-Jan Droppert on the economic crisis afflicting the domestic game

HOLLAND

THE Dutch FA announced recently that the country's 36 professional clubs had suffered combined losses of £16million. The main cause is said to be the lack of revenue generated by Bosman transfers.

Many clubs are now being forced to sell players, terminate contracts and freeze wages. Some players have even been made to hand back their club cars as a cost-cutting measure.

Ajax have no fewer than 57 players under contract, but are now anxious to reduce their squad in order to cut wage costs. Fred Grim, Ole Tobiassen, Aron Winter (currently on loan to Sparta) and Tijani Babangida (on loan to Vitesse) have already been told that their contracts won't be renewed.

PSV, meanwhile, will say goodbye to Yuri Nikiforov. To his surprise, the Russian centre-back, who was a key player last season, was told that he is surplus to requirements. He will join Rangers at the end of the season.

On the field, PSV suffered two big blows within a week. First, they were eliminated from the UEFA Cup by Feyenoord. The quarter-final tie went to extra time and then penalties after both legs were drawn 1-1. Georgi Gakhokidze missed the crucial spot-kick allowing Feyenoord to win through 5-4.

Pierre Van Hooijdonk was again the key man for the Rotterdam side, scoring both the team's goals and then converting his shoot-out kick.

Four days later, a 1-1 draw with League leaders Ajax meant PSV remained seven points off the top with just seven games remaining.

Three weeks earlier, Ajax had also drawn 1-1 with fellow title challengers Feyenoord. But though they deserved a late equaliser, it proved highly controversial. The Rotterdam club claimed Ajax forward Nikos Machlas won a penalty, converted by Andre Bergdolmo, after feigning a foul by keeper Edwin Zoetebier.

Coach Mark Wotte, currently working at the Dutch FA, will replace Hans Westerhof at Willem II next season.

Pierre is the key...Van Hooijdonk fired Feyenoord past PSV

Dropped...Standard's Johan Walem

BELGIUM

RWDM aim to keep it in the family

RWD Molenbeek, who are set to finish their first season back in the top flight in a respectable mid-table position, look likely to exchange brothers as coaches.

Emilio Ferrera, who has accepted an offer to join Second Division champions-elect Mechelen, could well be succeeded at the Edmond Machtens stadium by his older brother, Manu. He was sacked by struggling Eendracht Aalst in January, and RWDM have said he tops their list of candidates.

Emilio set up his move to Mechelen after rejecting a new offer from RWDM. Current Mechelen boss Fi Van Hoof becomes the club's chief scout.

Meanwhile, Aalst are faring no better, having replaced Manu Ferrera with Luc Limpens, and relegation looks a certainty. The players' contracts have been replaced with week-to-week deals after the crisis-ridden club filed for bankruptcy.

Genk have emerged as favourites to win the championship for the second time in four years after withstanding Charleroi's rally to win 3-2 at home. On the same weekend, long-time leaders Club Brugge lost 1-0 at home to Gent.

Fast-fading Standard Liege recently sprung a surprise by dropping international midfielder Johan Walem.

Nicholas Harling

● **LUXEMBOURG** internationals Daniel Theis and Laurent Deville have taken charge of their club side, Progress Niederkorn, until the end of the season, *writes Tim Brice*. They stepped in when coach Henri Bossi was appointed to lead the country's national youth team.

SWITZERLAND

League reformers triumph at third attempt

SWISS club bosses have voted overwhelmingly, at the third attempt, to end the current League format, which has been in place since 1987. The presidents of the 24 First and Second Division clubs agreed, by a 21-3 decision, to reduce the top flight to 10 clubs from 12 starting from the 2003-04 season and boost the Second Division by four to 16 teams.

The 10 top division sides will play each other four times, with the bottom team relegated and the top Second Division side promoted. In addition, the ninth-placed First Division side will play-off against the lower level's runners-up for a place in the following season's top flight.

This does away with the current format, where the top division splits in two after 22 games. At present, the top eight go on to contest the championship, while the bottom four enter the relegation/promotion play-offs against the top four lower division sides.

"This change was urgently needed," said national leagues president Jean-Francois Kurz. "We do not have the commercial clout to support a 12-team First Division. Some clubs are in deep financial trouble and struggling to survive. We hope to look forward now to a better future for Swiss football."

Lugano, who are struggling to survive with debts of £5million, were further rocked by the suspected suicide of club president Helios Jermini. The 63-year-old was expected

in Milan for a meeting with the club's Italian backers, but never arrived. His body was recovered from his car, found in Lake Lugano, two days later.

In the championship play-offs, leaders Basle suffered a setback when beaten 1-0 away by Grasshopper. This cut their lead to four points over their Zurich rivals.

Both sides advanced to the Cup semi-finals, Basle meeting Young Boys and Grasshopper playing Lausanne.

Ivar von Rulach

PORTUGAL

Boavista eye historic championship win

DEFENDING champions Boavista remain in contention to become the first team outside the Big Three to win the League championship twice. With five games to play they lay a point behind leaders Sporting Lisbon, with the country's other major sides, FC Porto and Benfica, trailing in their wake.

Only two titles have been won by non-Big Three sides – in 1946, by Belenenses, and in 2001, by Boavista.

FC Porto dropped out of contention in the League after winning just one of a run of five games. They also bowed out of the Champions League after a disappointing second group phase campaign. Boavista also went out after the second phase, trailing in third behind Manchester United and Bayern Munich in Group A.

Mario Coluna, one of the greatest players in Benfica's history, did not mince his words when commenting on the ongoing demolition of the Stadium of Light during a recent visit to Lisbon.

"It was difficult to believe what I saw," he said. "I still remember the intense popular campaign that made it possible to build the stadium, where we played some of the greatest Portuguese and Benfica football matches ever. To see it now going down is very difficult to stomach."

Coluna, now federation president in his native Mozambique, was in Lisbon to take part in a celebration of the Benfica team that won the European Cup in 1961 and 1962.

Alberto da Silva

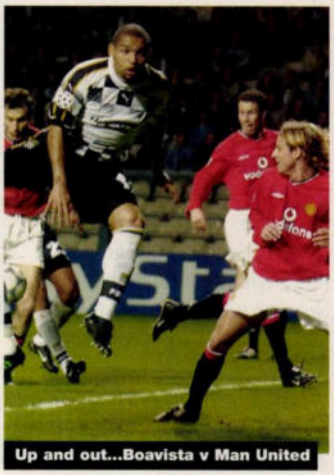
REP OF IRELAND

St Patrick's hand title to Shelbourne

THERE has been a farcical end to a farcical season in the Eircom League, with title challengers St Patrick's Athletic docked points for the second time this term, handing Shelbourne the championship by default.

League leaders Shels were favourites to take the title, but St Pat's had games in hand, which if they won, would have secured them the championship.

However, two weeks before the end of the season Shelbourne chief executive Ollie Byrne discovered that



Up and out...Boavista v Man United

St Pat's' Ugandan international, Charles Mbabazi Livingstone, had not been properly registered for their first five League games.

The club were duly docked 15 points, ruling them out of the championship race.

Earlier in the season, St Pat's were docked nine points for playing Paul Marney at a time when he was not properly registered. However, they subsequently got those points back through arbitration. Now another appeal is likely, and the championship will probably end up being decided in the High Court.

There has also been trouble in the First Division, with promotion challengers Waterford United docked three points for fielding an illegal player.

Sean Creedon

Pro-file Glen De Boeck

Anderlecht captain counting the cost of turning on his coach

AFTER failing in his attempt to lead a players' revolt against Anderlecht coach Aime Anthuenis, club captain Glen De Boeck even considered retiring.

However, De Boeck, a gritty centre-back in contention for a spot in Belgium's defence at this summer's World Cup, later went back on his thoughts of quitting and ended up pledging his support for Anthuenis.

By then, though, the damage was done. This was an episode De Boeck will take some time to live down.

Anderlecht have been afflicted by discontent all season, as the team have struggled to repeat the dominant form that brought them the last two League titles. A number of players had already put their heads above the parapet to criticise their coach's methods and tactics when, in late February, De Boeck and keeper Filip De Wilde believed the time had come for an uprising.

Believing the whole squad was anti-Anthuenis, De Boeck and De Wilde organised a secret dressing-room ballot on their coach. However, when the votes were counted, only six players had voted against the coach, while 13 had backed him. "It seems we were wrong in thinking that the players were no longer satisfied," said De Boeck, who joined Anderlecht from Mechelen in 1995. "Filip and me take full responsibility. We will now stand 100 per cent behind our coach and try to win Anderlecht's third championship in a row. I want to publicly apologise to the coach.

"These past few days, I have experienced the worst moments of my career. If I could have imagined how this was all to snowball, I wouldn't have started it. As captain, I was just trying to bring about an open, constructive debate on some of our poor performances. Believe me, my aim was not to cause a coup d'etat. I also hope the press will let this incident rest."

There has not been much chance of that, especially since midfielder Yves Vanderhaeghe revealed that De Boeck's initial reaction to the abortive revolution was to contemplate ending his career. "Glen told me he wanted to quit football," said Vanderhaeghe. "I had to work hard to talk him out of it. I told him it wasn't worth abandoning his career over."

So will Anthuenis forgive and forget? In a World Cup year, there can be little doubt that De Boeck has conceded a spectacular own goal.

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club Anderlecht
Country Belgium
Born August 22, 1971, in Reet
Previous clubs FC Boom, KV Mechelen
International debut October 1993, v Gabon
International caps 29 (0 goals)
Honours Belgian League 2000, 2001

CROSSWORD

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ACROSS

2 Full name of midfielder back with Milan from a loan spell at the Velodrome (7,2)
6 National side of Bayern's Samuel Kuffour (5)
7 Forward transferred last year from Orebro to Malmo (5)
9 Right-sided midfielder in the Deportivo squad (6)
10 Former Angers goalkeeper of Bordeaux and France (4)
12 European Champions Cup winners of 1971, 1972, 1973 and 1995 (4)
14 Ex-player who succeeded Vulic as Hajduk's coach (6)
17 Turkish defender currently in England with Aston Villa (5)
18 Consummate defender who captains Lazio (5)
19 1993 European club champions (9)

DOWN

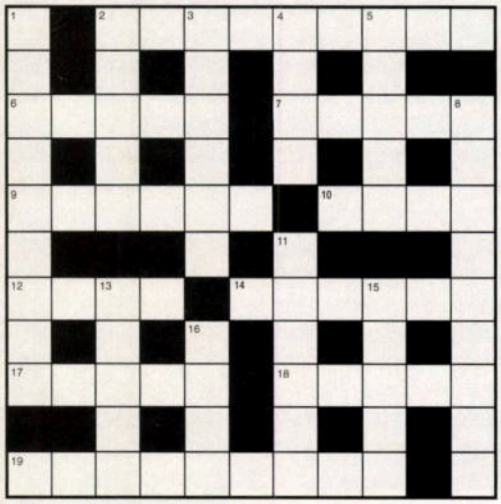
1 Teenage Sporting Lisbon midfielder attracting no little attention (4,5)
2 Promising Angolan striker whose career has begun at Primeiro Agosto (5)
3 Home stadium of Spain's Deportivo La Coruna (6)
4 Keeper transferred in 2000 from Barcelona to Fortuna Sittard (4)
5 Cameroon forward now at Sunderland from Parma (5)
8 Nation seeking FIFA status under coach Sepp Piontek (9)
11 Austrian hero recently elevated to the post of national team coach (6)
13 Swedish goalkeeper who spent time in Spain with Real Sociedad (5)
15 Star whose penalty miss cost Senegal this year's African Nations Cup (5)
16 Czech midfielder established in Munich with 1860 (4)

MARCH SOLUTION

Across: 1 Decastle, 7 Union, 8 Diouf, 9 Makor, 10 Rojo, 13 Poom, 14 Metsu, 17 Roiha, 18 Kpoto, 19 Servette.
Down: 1 Daum, 2 Cvitanovic, 3 Santos, 4 Lodz, 5 Buffon, 6 Cotonsport, 11 Oporto, 12 Petkov, 15 Daye, 16 Wome.

MARCH WINNERS

1st prize: Vicente Watson, New York.
5 runners-up: Giedrius Gricas, Vilkaviskis, Lithuania; Andy Sayers, Leicestershire; Samuel Angol, Florida; Unisa Jalloh, Varese, Italy; Michael Porter, Essex.



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Brann fury as Karadas moves

Sigurd Odegaard on the close season's most controversial transfer

NORWAY

ROSENBORG'S purchase of Brann Bergen favourite Azar Karadas infuriated his former club's supporters and once again showed how the long-time champions can more or less buy anyone they like in the domestic market.

The rivalry between Bergen and Trondheim has always been tense, and Brann have been one of Rosenborg's main challengers in recent years. So when Karadas decided it was time to sign for Rosenborg, the Brann supporters turned on him, calling him a traitor.

But Brann were in financial difficulties and decided to cash in on the player before he could leave under the Bosman ruling.

"It is a great step for my career to be able to join Rosenborg, the leading club in the country," said Karadas. "But I must admit my years with Brann have been fantastic."

Karadas was mostly used as a striker by Brann, though he has also played in central defence for Norway's Under-21s. He is likely to continue up front in Trondheim since a long-term injury to Frode Johnsen means Rosenborg are short of strikers.

'Traitor' jibes...Azar Karadas

Jan Aage Fjortoft will make an unexpected return to action having apparently hung up his boots following his dismal period with Stabaek last season. The 35-year-old has been tempted back by Lillestrom, who have serious injury problems.

Norway surprisingly beat Denmark 1-0 in Copenhagen in early March in a game comprising domestic League selections only. And there was a bonus for national coach Nils Johan Semb, who discovered one interesting player for the future in Brede Hangeland. The 20-year-old Viking player orchestrated the midfield superbly. Harald Brattbakk scored the goal.

DENMARK

Morten carries on moaning

MORTEN OLSEN moaned his way through March as Denmark's preparations for the World Cup were scarred by controversy.

His greatest anger was reserved for FIFA and its decision to switch the Group A fixture against Senegal to an afternoon kick-off from an evening start. The Denmark manager was so incensed that the DBU launched an official protest to FIFA, complaining that it gave France an unfair advantage in the group. The world champions now have only one afternoon start in the sticky heat of Korea, whereas the Danes have two. "This is not fair," said Olsen. "We want to be treated equally."

Denmark were no happier when they were beaten 3-0 by the Republic of Ireland in Dublin. This time Olsen was unhappy about the pitch, saying: "I find consolation in knowing that the World Cup will be played on much better pitches."

Back home the Superliga continued to be dominated by Brondby, who were nine points clear of FC Copenhagen with nine games to play following wins over AB, Silkeborg and Esbjerg.

At the bottom, the decision to force Lyngby to continue playing as amateurs is bringing predictably embarrassing results. In the first five matches since the winter break they conceded 25 goals, with home crowds down to a pitiful few hundred.

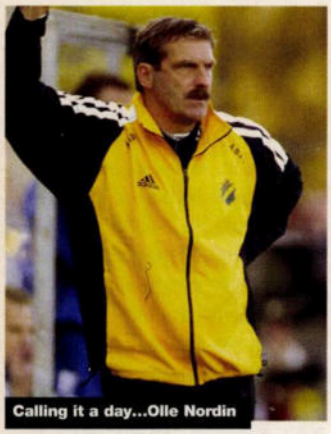
In the First Division, Peter Schmeichel has decided to relinquish ownership of his boyhood club, Hvidovre, who are now flirting with relegation. At the same time another legendary former Denmark player, striker Preben Elkjaer, has bought the historic B93 club of Copenhagen.

Jim Holden

SWEDEN

Stressed Nordin quits AIK

SWEDISH soccer was rocked by the resignation of AIK coach Olle Nordin because of health problems only weeks before the new League season kicks off. Nordin, in charge of the



Calling it a day...Olle Nordin

national team at Italia 90, was reported to be exhausted by work commitments and suffering from stress. However, this may be only part of the story.

AIK have lost much of their dynamism during Nordin's reign and finished last season behind Stockholm rivals Hammarby and Djurgardens in the League. The coach has also had to live in the shadow of his predecessor, Stuart Baxter, whom many have credited as the main groundbreaker for Stockholm's present football boom.

Former IFK Gothenburg defender Peter Larsson will now act as caretaker.

Djurgardens may quit Stockholm's old Olympic stadium. It is not up to UEFA's requirements and the city council is unwilling to finance renovations. The club are now considering playing at Rasunda, the home of deadly rivals AIK, though the idea has been panned by the fans.

Pentti Hietanen

FINLAND

Atlantis reborn as Allianssi

AC ALLIANSSI is the new name in the Premier League this season. They have taken the place vacated by the defunct FC Atlantis.

The new club has taken on 24 former Atlantis players, including Brazilian forward Adriano, and will be coached by Ari Tiittanen, who led Atlantis to the Finnish Cup last season.

Some doubts remain, however, about whether Allianssi will be allowed to represent Finland in next season's UEFA Cup.

HJK Helsinki have lost Finland midfielder Jari Ilola for at least two months because of an ankle injury.

Pentti Hietanen

ICELAND

Steinsson's day to remember

GRETAR RAFN STEINSSON made an unforgettable debut when scoring Iceland's goal in the 6-1 drubbing by Brazil in Cuiaba.

The Akranes striker even drew applause from the 50,000 crowd when he scored 17 minutes after appearing as a second-half substitute.

The game was one of the most spectacular international mismatches of recent times, but at least it allowed Iceland coach Atli Edvaldsson to try out some new faces from a squad comprising mainly home-based players.

Back home, First Division sides Leiftur and Dalvik have merged. Imaginatively known as Leiftur/Dalvik, they will alternate home games between their current grounds.

Rab Christie

Pro-file Daniel Berg Hestad

Molde and Norway midfielder bang in form after spell in jail

MOLDE midfield ace Daniel Berg Hestad is literally going straight to a permanent spot for Norway.

Last year, he was behind bars, jailed for 27 days for drink-driving, but how he has rehabilitated himself since his days of incarceration.

The 26-year-old was a star turn throughout the 2001 League campaign, combining intelligent midfield prompting with nine goals. He was rewarded with a call-up to the Norwegian squad for a tournament in Portugal against B teams from the host nation and Romania.

It was the opportunity Berg Hestad had been longing for. Back in the national team for the first time in three years – his last game was against Estonia in January 1999 – he was, in the eyes of many, the most impressive Norwegian player at the tournament.

With national coach Nils Johan Semb also singing his praises, more full caps should be in the pipeline.

Some might say it was about time Berg Hestad fulfilled his potential. During the late 1990s he was considered the brightest young thing in the country. Not only did he boast skill and vision in abundance and show himself to be equally adept at scoring with head and feet, but he also had the ball-winning ability and energy to complement his more creative qualities.

He skippered Norway's Under-21s, made his senior international debut in April 1998 against Denmark, helped Molde qualify for the Champions League in 1999-00 and attracted attention from clubs in England and Italy.

However, Berg Hestad abruptly lost his way in 2000. His club form was more often than not indifferent and his international prospects faded away. The prison spell for being caught drunk at the wheel of his car following a club party – he was found to be five times over the limit – completed Berg Hestad's tale of woe. But it says much for the former golden boy's strength of character that he turned out to be a model parolee.

He is arguably playing better than ever before, and we should not be surprised that he is such a fine player. The midfielder does, after all, come from a Norwegian football dynasty. His father, Stein Olav Hestad, amassed a record 680 games at full-back for Molde, a grandfather, Odd Berg, was a striker for the same club, while his other grandfather, Harry Hestad, used to be a professional with Den Haag in Holland. Daniel is a chip off the old block.

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club Molde
Country Norway
Born July 30, 1975, in Molde
International debut April 1998, v Denmark
International caps 7 (0 goals)
Honours Norwegian Cup 1994

Referee arrested in match-fixing probe

Hasan Cemali on the latest developments in the alleged rigging scandal

TURKEY

TOP DIVISION referee Sadik Ilhan has been arrested and charged for his alleged role in the match-fixing scandal that has rocked Turkey in recent weeks. The official is said to have been plied with prostitutes in return for skewing results.

In addition, a court has ordered the arrest of alleged chief fixer Ali Fevzi Bir. He is in Italy but the arrest warrant means Turkey could apply for extradition. Meanwhile, 24 MPs have tabled a motion calling for a parliamentary inquiry into the affair.

The initial match-fixing allegations appeared in the *Milliyet* newspaper. An article claimed that Ilhan fixed games earlier this season in conjunction with fellow referees Ali Uluyol, Harun Yigit and Sabahattin Bitirim.

Of the referees mentioned, however, only Ilhan is accused of direct involvement with Bir. The latter is alleged to have fixed the results and bet on the outcome of the matches abroad.

Turkish foreign minister Ismail Cem has compared Italian police to "fascists in the time of Mussolini" in the wake of the ugly brawl at the end of the Roma v Galatasaray Champions League game.

Gala's director of football, Abdurrahim Albayrak, said that all of his side's players had been hit, while striker Umit Karan claimed: "I've got a black eye and my legs are blue from the beating."

Gala coach Mircea Lucescu turned angrily on the Italian press after the 1-1 draw, insisting the brawl was prompted by offensive comments they had made about his side being a team of butchers. Meanwhile, Roma forward Gabriel Batistuta has apologised for striking Gala's Emre Asik at the start of the fighting.

UEFA has launched an investigation into the incident.

In the League, Fenerbahce wasted a golden opportunity to replace Gala at the top when only managing a 2-2 draw at home to lowly Malatyaspor.

Free for all...Roma and Gala players and officials brawl after the game

We're through...Panathinaikos celebrate reaching the Champions League last eight

GREECE

Panathinaikos progress

PANATHINAIKOS made it to the Champions League quarter-finals on the back of an unbeaten home record in this season's competition. Sergio Markarian's team qualified after drawing with Real Madrid in Athens.

"Congratulations to the players for their effort. We deserved to qualify and we did," said the coach.

Panathinaikos have also shown good progress in the League. At one stage they were 12 points behind the leaders, AEK Athens, but that had narrowed to four points with five games left.

Olympiakos, who had been top, dropped back to second when held to a 1-1 draw at Panathinaikos. There were ugly scenes at the end of the game, with the referee suffering head injuries after being attacked by fans who had invaded the pitch.

AEK retook pole position with a 4-1 home win over lowly Panahaiki.

Lou Economopoulos

YUGOSLAVIA

Partizan have title in sight

PARTIZAN won their first five games of the spring League campaign to establish an apparently impregnable lead at the top of the table. They led by 12 points with 12 games remaining from defending champions Red Star, who lost points away to Rad and Vojvodina, both goalless draws.

Two days after the Vojvodina game, Red Star fans broke into the club's training complex and attempted to assault the players.

Meanwhile, Vojvodina are under new management. Mladost Apatin coach Cedomir Djoincevic has been brought in following the resignation of Slobodan Pavkovic. Other changes came at Obilic, who have appointed former national team boss Milan Zivadinovic to replace Ratko Dostanic, and Sutjeska, where Brajan Nenezic stepped down because of interference from club officials in his team selection.

Off the pitch, attention has been focused on the new political agreement between Serbia and Montenegro. It has been decided that both republics will continue to live together as a union, and play as a single national team, at least for the time being. That team will be known as Serbia and Montenegro, though it will continue to be called Yugoslavia at least until the autumn when the new constitution is expected to be ratified.

● Velibor Vasovic, a legend of Yugoslav soccer, died on March 4 in Belgrade aged 62. Vasovic became the first Yugoslav to lift the European Cup when captaining Ajax to victory over Panathinaikos in the 1971 Final.

Vladimir Novak

CROATIA

Blazevic banned for butting referee

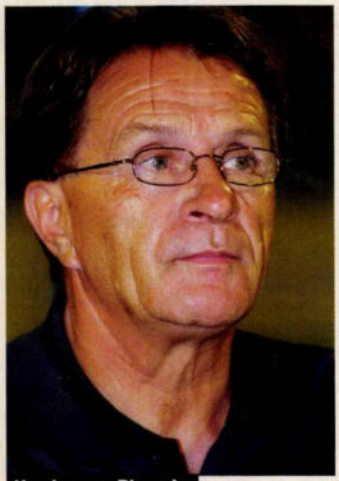
FORMER national team boss Miroslav Blazevic has been handed a three-month coaching ban for assaulting a referee just days after taking charge of lowly top division side Osijek.

The 67-year-old, who returned to Croatia from a spell with the Iranian national team, was suspended after he verbally assaulted and butted the official, Ivan Novak, following a 2-1 League defeat at Dinamo Zagreb.

Blazevic, on the Osijek bench for the first time, was reportedly incensed about a penalty decision the referee had given against his team.

Coach Vjeran Simunic was out of work for just four days after resigning from Hrvatski dragovoljac following a 4-0 home defeat by Sibenik. He was appointed by Kamen Ingrad after their coach, Rajko Magic, stepped down. Magic left after falling out with the club president. Luka Bonacic has succeeded Simunic at Hrvatski.

Zdravko Reic



Head case...Blazevic

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

First Serb called up

RECENTLY-APPOINTED national coach Blaz Sliskovic named eight new faces in his initial squad, one of them a Serb – Red Star Belgrade's Vladan Grujic – for the first time.

League leaders Zeljeznicar reached the Cup semi-finals, along with Leotar – the first team from the Bosnian Serb Republic Srpska to make the last four – Celik and Sarajevo.

Zdravko Reic

SLOVENIA

Maribor on spring surge

MARIBOR, disappointing during the autumn League campaign, made a strong start to the spring programme, winning four out of five games to surge to the top of the table. Previous leaders Primorje lost four in a row, a run that perhaps not surprisingly led to the dismissal of coach Ivan Buljan.

A more unexpected departure came at Koper, who had moved up to second, the club's highest ever League position. Nevertheless, Brane Oblak has been replaced by Croat Nenad Gracan, who was fired by Hajduk Split five months ago.

Zdravko Reic

MACEDONIA

Ciric back after two years

NATIONAL coach Nikola Ilievski made some notable inclusions in his first squad, as he sought to end Macedonia's 18-month winless run.

The newcomers were 20-year-old midfielder Aleksandar Mitreski of Swiss side Young Boys, forward Goce Toleski (24, Napredok Kicevo) and defender Aleksandar Vasoski (22, Vardar Skopje). In-form Eintracht Frankfurt forward Sasa Ciric, 34, was recalled after an absence of some two years.

Michel Stojmanovski

MALTA

Hibernians on course

HIBERNIANS' convincing 3-1 win over Floriana at the end of March kept them well on course for their first League title for seven years.

Their cause was greatly helped when challengers Birkirkara and Valletta played out a 2-2 draw. Hibernians also know that in Adrian Mifsud and Nigerian Chuckunyere Ndubisi, they have the League's most lethal forward partnership.

Domenico Aquilina

Pro-file Fatih Akyel

Fenerbahce defender back in the World Cup frame

TURKISH defender Fatih Akyel faces a race against the clock to regain his place in the national team in time for the World Cup.

An ever-present on the right side of a three-man defence at Euro 2000 and a regular last season, too, the 24-year-old was relegated to the bench last autumn when a move from Galatasaray to Mallorca turned sour.

However, now Fatih is back in Turkish football with Fenerbahce, he is confident of resuming normal service in his country's first 11.

"Even though my difficulties at Mallorca have set me back a little, I won't abandon hopes of playing a full role in Japan and South Korea," says Fatih, who was only 19 when he made his senior international bow against Wales in August 1997. "Naturally, I want to be as active as I can in helping Turkey have a great tournament. I've joined a great club in Fenerbahce, and the fact we are in with a very good chance of winning the Turkish League this season should help my cause."

All had looked so rosy for Fatih on signing for Mallorca last summer; technically, it was a Bosman free transfer, but he demanded that Mallorca pay his old club £2.8million. The defender was looking forward to playing for one of Spain's top sides, Champions League football was on the menu, and he also had a substantial signing-on fee to bank, reportedly £700,000.

But the move simply did not work out. Mallorca's Austrian coach, Bernd Krauss, was not convinced by Fatih, and the defender's appearances in the starting line-up became collector's items. By November, Fatih had only one idea in mind – to return home to Turkey as soon as possible. Initially, the smart money was on him rejoining Galatasaray, the club that reared him. However, Fener president Aziz Yildirim was determined to outflank his Istanbul rivals and persuaded Fatih to sign up on a three-year contract.

"We are always looking to add high-quality players to our team, and Fatih of course fits the bill," declared Yildirim. "He can play full-back, in central defence and even in midfield, and is a forceful character.

"He's a complete player. As a defender, he's committed, disciplined and strong, and like the established international that he is, he goes forward with a lot of enterprise. I hope he will stay here until he retires."

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club Fenerbahce
Country Turkey
Born December 26, 1977, in Istanbul
Previous clubs Galatasaray, Bakyrkoyspor, Galatasaray, Mallorca (Spa)
International debut August 1997, v Wales
International caps 33 (0 goals)
Honours UEFA Cup 2000 (Galatasaray); European Super Cup 2000; Turkish League 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000; Turkish Cup 1996, 1999, 2000

Kasperczak back after 24 years

Dariusz Kurowski on the return of a Polish great

POLAND

FORMER international Henryk Kasperczak has returned to his native land after 24 years abroad, to take charge of defending champions Wisla Krakow.

He replaces Franciszek Smuda, who was fired after the team lost two games in a row at the start of the spring campaign in the championship play-offs.

Kasperczak, 56, has most recently been in charge of Mali, leading them to a fourth-place finish as hosts at this year's African Nations Cup finals. Previously, he took Ivory Coast to third place in the 1994 tournament and Tunisia to the Final, where they lost to South Africa, two years later.

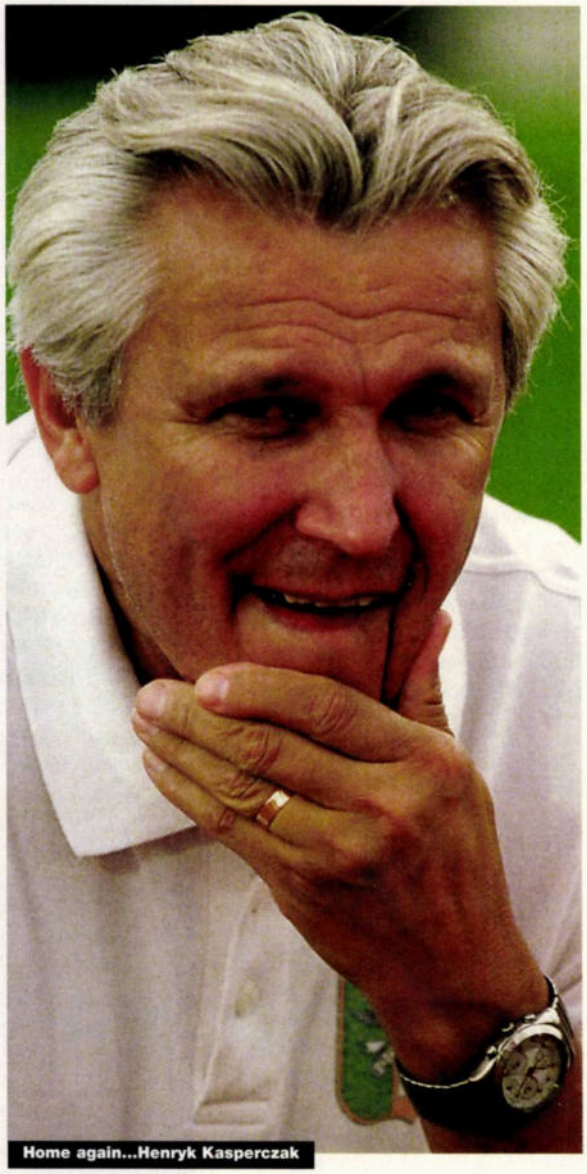
Kasperczak was a member of the Poland side that finished third at the 1974 World Cup. He moved abroad after the following finals tournament, finishing his playing career at Metz in France and then, as coach, leading that club to the French Cup in 1984.

Both of Wisla's League defeats came in Warsaw – 4-2 by Polonia and 1-0 a week later by Legia. It was too much for the Krakow side's owner and chairman, Boguslaw Cupial, who has invested heavily in the club and transformed them into a major force in Polish football.

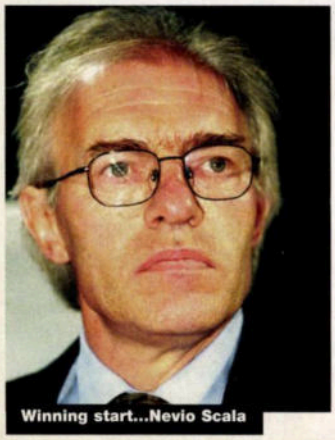
Kasperczak has been regarded as something of a messiah by the Wisla supporters, though the side could only draw 1-1 at home to GKS Katowice in his first game in charge and then lost 2-1 away to Amica Wronki next time out.

The bad run of results meant the Krakow side dropped to third in the play-off table, and allowed Legia to go six points clear at the top after seven games.

The Warsaw side's resurgence is a personal triumph for their Yugoslav coach, Dragomir Okuka. He was under great pressure after the team made a less-than-promising start to the season.



Home again...Henryk Kasperczak



Winning start...Nevio Scala

UKRAINE

Shakhtar extend unbeaten run

SHAKHTAR DONETSK kicked off their spring League campaign in style, thrashing lowly Vorskla 4-0 at home to extend their unbeaten run to an unprecedented 38 games.

The Miners have not lost a League game since July 2000, when they went down 1-0 away to CSKA Kyiv.

The result against Vorskla also meant that Nevio Scala made a winning start to his tenure as coach. "I'm very happy that our players continue to progress step by step," said the Italian, who was appointed to replace Victor Prokopenko during the winter break. "Of course, we are facing a difficult task to overhaul perennial winners Kyiv Dynamo. But with the potential of our players, I'm sure we can win the championship."

Dynamo led Shakhtar on goal difference with 10 games to play.

Hennadiy Litovchenko, a former Dynamo and USSR star of the 1980s, has quit as coach of Kryvbas for health reasons. He has been replaced by Igor Nadein, who was previously in charge of Kryvbas in the early 1990s.

New national coach Leonid Buriak lost his first game in charge, as Ukraine went down 1-0 to World Cup co-hosts Japan in Osaka.

Oleg Zadernovsky

CZECH REPUBLIC

Liberec out with heads held high

SLOVAN LIBEREC'S dream of a UEFA Cup semi-final place was ended when they were defeated 4-0 away by Borussia Dortmund following a 0-0 draw in the first leg.

However, the North Bohemian side had already far outstripped expectations just by reaching the quarter-final stage. In the previous round, they had hammered Lyon 5-2 on aggregate despite being forced to play their home leg at Prague's Lent stadium. UEFA had declared Liberec's Mestsky ground unsuitable after the French team complained that the pitch was too 'bumpy'.

Liberec, who had never previously reached the last eight in European competition, can now concentrate on their bid to land their first League title. They went top at the end of March when beating Drnovice 3-1 away while previous leaders, Sparta Prague, the defending champions, were losing 2-0 at Jablonec.

Roy Kitson

AUSTRIA

Tirol top but in crisis

WITH FC Tirol cruising to their third consecutive League title, one might expect all to be sweetness and light in their camp. Not so.

Debts of some £10million have already forced the club to sell key players such as German keeper Marc Ziegler (to Austria Wien) and Swiss defender Marco Zwyssig (to Basle). Now club coach Joachim Low and his squad are up in arms over unpaid wages. They claim they have not received a pay cheque since last December and warn they will walk away if the cash owed is not paid soon.

Hans Krankl awarded six new caps for his first match as coach of Austria, a home friendly against Slovakia. They included Rapid Wien defender Ferdinand Feldhofer and Grazer AK midfielder Rene Aufhauser. Krankl then had the satisfaction of watching his new charges win 2-0.

Nick Bidwell

SLOVAKIA

Zilina pile on the points

'WINTER champions' MSK Zilina have continued to call the shots in the League race, leaving challengers Artmedia Petrzalka, Ruzomberok and Inter Bratislava struggling to keep pace.

In a key recent game, Leos Kalvoda's hard-working side beat the 2000-01 League runners-up Slovan Bratislava 1-0 at home.

Slovan, under caretaker boss Jan Svehlik, are still struggling to find any consistency and look unlikely to break out of their mid-table position.

Roy Kitson

GEORGIA

Kaladze threatens switch of allegiance

STAR international defender Kakha Kaladze has claimed he will seek to play for Ukraine's national side if the Georgian authorities fail to secure the release of his kidnapped brother, Levan.

The Milan player made his threat despite assurances from Georgian state president Eduard Shevardnadze that the police were doing everything in their powers to free Levan. He has been held captive, with a £400,000 ransom on his head, since being abducted by an unknown group in Tbilisi last May.

"I will become a Ukrainian citizen with a view to playing for Ukraine if the Georgian police don't find my brother by May 1 this year, or if they can't show me an effective plan for his liberation," Kaladze stated. "I know the FIFA rules governing international appearances, but I will ask them to make an exception for me."

Italian coach Gianni Carnevale has taken the helm at top division side WIT Georgia. The former Dinamo Batumi boss replaced Gocha Tkebuchava, who resigned in the wake of a 3-0 home League defeat by Torpedo Kutaisi.

Vladimir Kalinkovich

Ultimatum...Kakha Kaladze

Round-up

FORMER Red Star Belgrade coach Slavoljub Muslin has been appointed to lead **BULGARIAN** League leaders Levski Sofia until the end of the season. He replaced German Ruediger Abramczik, who was sacked despite winning five of his seven games in charge since taking over in January. The club said they took the action because they were not happy with the way the team were playing. Muslin resigned from Yugoslav champions Red Star last autumn after they were knocked out of the UEFA Cup by modest Ukrainian side CSKA Kyiv.

Mihai Stoichita has become the fourth coach to take charge of **MOLDOVAN** champions Serif Tiraspol this season. The 47-year-old Romanian replaced Alexandr Golokolosov, who left after clashing with his players. Stoichita, formerly in charge of Steaua Bucharest, National Bucharest and the Panama national team, took over with Serif nine points clear at the top of the table.

Michael Bowesfield & Miron Goihman

Pro-file Ruslan Nigmatullin

Russia's number one eyeing a move up the Serie A ladder

RUSLAN NIGMATULLIN is the answer to Russia's goalkeeping prayers. Over the past decade, generally worthy keepers such as Dmitri Kharin, Stanislav Cherchesov and Alexander Filimonov have at times let the side down with the sort of errors guaranteed to make any coach apoplectic.

But since Nigmatullin made his debut against the United States two years ago, utter reliability has been the name of the game.

He could not have hoped for a more auspicious start to his international career than five clean sheets in his first five games. His sharp reflexes, flawless positioning, catching ability and composure represented the bricks and mortar of a Russian back line that was breached only five times in their successful World Cup qualifying campaign.

Last year, Nigmatullin was equally impressive for Lokomotiv Moscow, catching the eye as the Railwaymen reached the Champions League this season and finished runners-up to Spartak in the 2001 Russian championship.

No surprise then that he was voted Russian Footballer of 2001 in three different polls, was named the country's Sportsman of the Year, and garnered the national fair-play prize – the quaintly named Soccer Gentleman of the Year.

Quite a collection for a keeper who was largely confined to the bench during a two-year spell at Spartak (1995-97) and was shunted off into the Lokomotiv sidings.

But once there, Nigmatullin blossomed into one of Europe's most accomplished keepers, and interest from the West was only to be expected. After rejecting moves to Juventus and Lazio because they saw him solely as a back-up, the keeper finally agreed to join another Serie A club, Verona, last December. But while he signed a four-and-a-half-year contract with Verona, Nigmatullin has a shock for those fans who believe he will be there long-term.

"I appreciated the way Verona negotiated with Lokomotiv and me," says the keeper. "I also think Verona play some of the best football in Italy. But it's no secret they will be ready to sell me to a bigger club after the World Cup." Could he be getting ahead of himself?

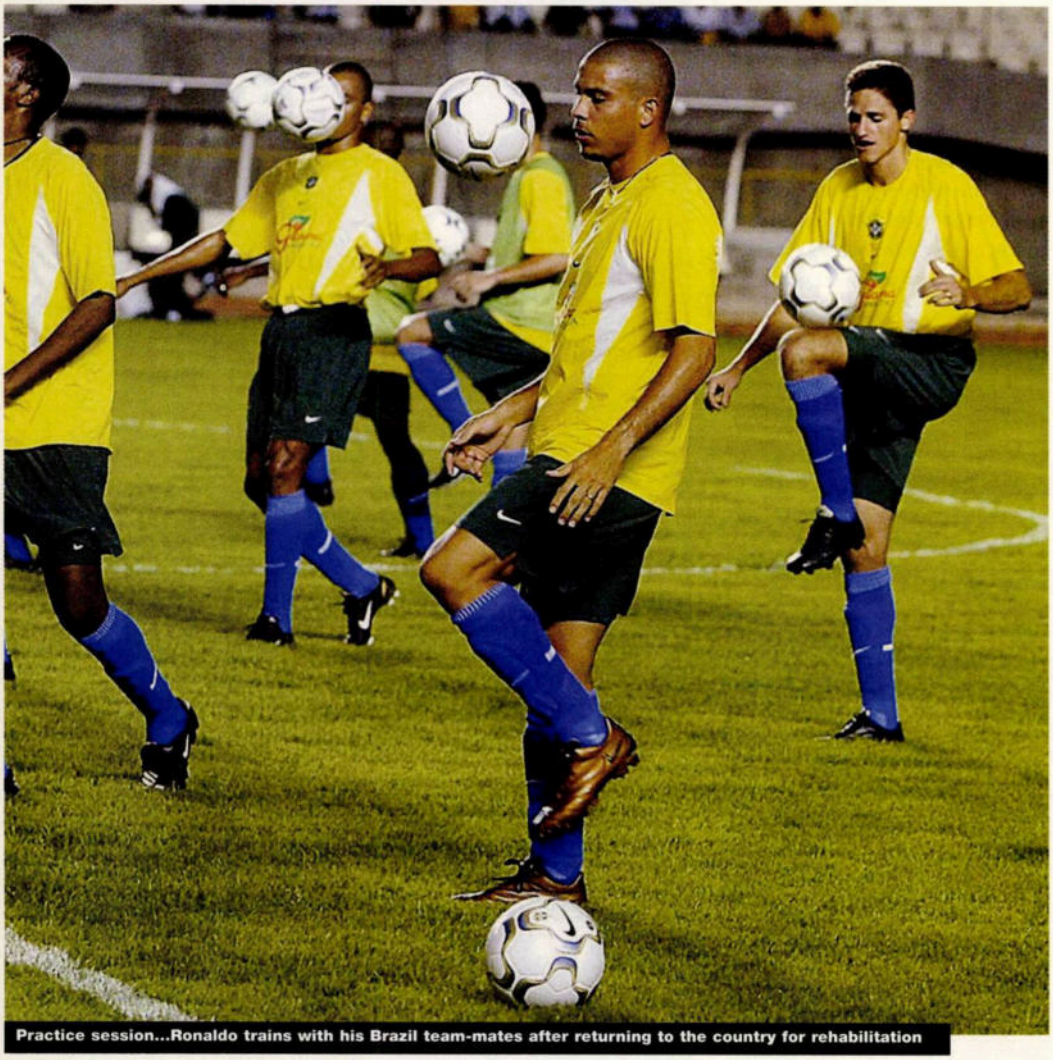
Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club Verona (Ita)
Country Russia
Born October 7, 1974, in Kazan
Previous clubs Electron Kazan, Kamaz Naberzhnye Chelny, Moscow Spartak, Lokomotiv Moscow
International debut April 2000, v USA
International caps 15
Honours Russian League 1996, 1997 (Spartak); Russian Cup 2000, 2001 (Lokomotiv)

Ronaldo back after commercial break

The forward resumed his advertising campaign before his playing career, writes Brian Homewood



Practice session...Ronaldo trains with his Brazil team-mates after returning to the country for rehabilitation

BRAZIL

IT HAS been a long, lonely wait, but after two and a half years in the doldrums, Ronaldo's career has finally got back into full swing. His advertising career, that is.

That familiar goofy grin is once again smiling down from billboards all over Brazil. Turn on the television and there he is again, urging viewers to buy a brand of mobile phones.

The Internazionale man has also been making his familiar appearances in the society pages of Brazilian newspapers, notably as a result of the Carnival outing that he tried to convince Italian supporters never happened. Ronaldo insisted he was returning to Brazil for rehabilitation and that it was just a coincidence that the Carnival was taking place while he was in Rio de Janeiro. However, on the first night of parading, he was photographed in one of the VIP boxes at the city's Sambadrome, where he was a guest of a brewer and had agreed to wear one of the company's T-shirts.

Indeed, life is almost back to normal for the twice World Player of the Year, the only difference being that the Phenomenon is now peddling mobile phones instead of Nike products.

All he needs to do now is start playing some football. By the end of March, Ronaldo had completed a month-long rehabilitation programme in Brazil and had appeared in his first international – the opening half of the 1-0 friendly win against Yugoslavia – since facing Holland in October 1999.

A staff of nine people, including three doctors, a nutritionist, a dentist and a physiotherapist, spent four weeks effectively rebuilding the stricken star. Brazil team doctor Jose Luis Runco said Ronaldo had first undergone "muscular reconditioning", followed by "physical recuperation", in an attempt to get him back to full fitness. "He needed to be reconditioned, especially on the nutrition side," said Runco.

One of the most important steps was to make the player a little less flabby, reducing his body fat from 13 per cent to 8.5 per cent.

This gargantuan effort culminated with a media circus at the Brazil team's training complex in the mountain resort of Teresopolis, two hours' drive from Rio. Around 100 people, including staff and media, watched Ronaldo sprint between cones, jog around the pitch and then take on defenders (provided by a local team) in one-on-one situations.

At the end, our Ronny was all optimism. "I'm in excellent condition and I'm ready to play," he said. "This is another challenge, to prove wrong the people who didn't believe I could come back."

Can he prove them wrong, though? Many wonder whether Ronaldo will ever be the same again after undergoing two operations on his right knee, and then, after making his Serie A comeback last year, being plagued by three muscular injuries in quick succession. The most recent occurred on December 23, since when that 45 minutes against Yugoslavia has been his only action.

Even when Ronaldo was at his peak, in 1996-97 with Barcelona and the subsequent season with Inter, many felt he was overdoing the advertising side. In between scoring spectacular goals, Ronaldo turned into a globetrotting publicity machine. Barely a day went past without photographs and television reports of Ronaldo opening his bar, driving his latest car, making a commercial or suchlike.

At one stage, after his first injury, Ronaldo tried to go upmarket by sponsoring a play in Rio de Janeiro. But the effort fell rather flat when he admitted he had not seen the production, nor could he remember the last time he had gone to the theatre.

By making his advertising comeback before his playing comeback, Ronaldo has suggested that he has not learnt the lessons of his previous publicity overkill.

The Yugoslavia match was the first time this year Brazil had a chance to field a full-strength side, the federation (CBF) having foolishly decided not to play on February 12/13, the first FIFA approved international date of the year, because it coincided with Carnival.

Instead, Brazil played three games

on non-FIFA days – against Bolivia, Saudi Arabia and Iceland – so that both they and the opposition were missing top players.

The visit of Iceland's B team to Cuiaba was one of the biggest farces yet produced by the CBF. The Europeans – dubbed 'the Penguin Team' by a Brazilian media mistakenly believing the island is home to the flightless birds – sent a collection of fishermen, firemen, telecom technicians and bank managers to face Brazil's professionals and were duly hammered 6-1.

When it came to naming the squad for the Yugoslavia match, in Fortaleza, national coach Luiz Felipe Scolari continued to fly in the face of public opinion, leaving out Sao Paulo striker Franca, who has been one of the top attractions of the domestic season.

Franca, leading scorer in the Rio-Sao Paulo tournament with 15 goals, apparently saw his World Cup chances washed down the drain by a poor performance against Iceland – when he was given only 45 minutes to show his worth and was played out of position.

Botafogo striker Dodo, who has 14 goals, was also ignored, as was Mario Jardel, despite a prolific scoring record with Sporting Lisbon in Portugal.

Instead of these three and the still overlooked Romario, Scolari showed a strange preference for players who have been out of action. In addition to Ronaldo, his squad included Luizao – who hadn't played for six weeks after going to court in his efforts to leave Corinthians – and Belletti, who has been in the reserves at Sao Paulo. Admittedly, Luizao did score the goal that won the Yugoslavia game.

Sao Paulo's revival apart – they scored 39 goals in their first 12 Rio-Sao Paulo tournament games – the opening two months of the domestic season have been notable for the continued dismal form of Flamengo. Brazil's most popular club lay a miserable 13th out of 16 in the Rio-Sao Paulo table, while their form in the Libertadores Cup was little better. Home and away defeats by Chile's Universidad Catolica sent them to the bottom of their group and virtually eliminated them.

Following the second defeat, in Chile, around 40 Flamengo fans, armed with sticks, invaded the club's headquarters, scaling the wall and chasing startled players off the training field and into the dressing-room. The fans let off firecrackers on the pitch, sprayed fire extinguishers through the changing-room windows and attempted to break down the doors. By the time the police had arrived, the vandals had climbed back over the wall and disappeared.

They were not the only ones to vanish. Flamengo coach Joao Carlos has now been fired after failing to improve the team's performances.

Overlooked...Sao Paulo forward Franca was left out of the Yugoslavia game

Round-up

Perez returns to jail

Parole revoked...Wilson Perez

WILSON PEREZ, a **COLOMBIAN** international with Atletico Junior, has been sent back to jail by a high court, who reversed a lower court's decision to free him on parole to play for his club. Perez was sentenced to 50 months last year for drug trafficking.

In an amazing turn of fortunes, Bucaramanga, bottom last year, led this season's opening championship by five points after winning five games in a row for the first time.

Willington Ortiz, a national team player during the 1970s and 1980s, has been elected to the Senate in Colombia's March elections.

Cesar Villegas, 46, the main shareholder of Bogota club Independiente Santa Fe, became the latest victim of violence in the country when he was shot dead on leaving his office by two men who escaped on a motorcycle.

Former player Luis Jairo Calanche Zulbaran was also assassinated, in Santa Marta, where he had appeared for Union Magdalena.

BOLIVIA: Defending champions Oriente Petrolero may be virtually out of the Libertadores Cup at the group stage, but they are doing well at home. After four games they led the opening championship table jointly with Bolivar, having beaten Guabira 8-0 in the Santa Cruz derby and Blooming 4-2 the following week. Paraguayan striker Alfredo Jara scored four goals in the first game, while teenage sensation Jose Castillo scored twice in both.

PARAGUAY: Big clubs Olimpia and Cerro Porteno continued to show poor form in the opening championship, both suffering at the hands of modest Sport Colombia. The latter beat Cerro 4-1, the upset of the season to date, then drew 3-3 with Olimpia. Another small club, Sportivo Luqueno, topped the standings by a point with two games to go.

CHILE: A public collection has been started to meet the running costs of financially-troubled Colo Colo, the country's most popular club. Even state president Ricardo Lagos chipped in despite being a fan of the club's great Santiago rivals, Universidad de Chile. Despite their problems, Colo Colo topped one of the four First Division groups after five games.

Eric Weil

River end seven-year jinx

Eric Weil sees Boca defeated at home in the country's classic derby

ARGENTINA

RIVER PLATE achieved their first victory for seven years at the home of arch-rivals Boca Juniors when winning Argentina's classic derby 3-0. The result also maintained the visitors' closing championship lead.

Esteban Cambiasso, Eduardo Coudet and Ricardo Rojas were on target as River stunned the partisan Boca fans at La Bombonera. The game was more even than the score suggests, however, and Boca were punished for their poor finishing.

Defeat left Boca languishing in mid-table, and they have undoubtedly been hampered by the absence of injured playmaker Juan Roman Riquelme. He has been quick to apportion blame for the team's indifferent form. "We are now paying for what was bound to happen sometime," said Riquelme. "The club have sold all our top players and have bought hardly anybody in the past four years. Our entire defence has gone – Cordoba, Ibarra, Bermudez, Samuel, Arruabarrena – top scorer Martin Palermo, too. We're trying to stay close in the championship and defend the Libertadores Cup, but it's difficult if they disintegrate the team."

Riquelme has refused to sign a new contract, even with the lure of Boca's maximum offer of £1.4million a year. He is currently collecting just £1,600 a month, but will be a free agent by June 2003. The rumours are that he will then move to Barcelona.

While River march on they have not been without their problems. They were held to goalless draws by newly-promoted sides Nueva Chicago and Banfield – the only points they dropped in the first seven rounds. Meanwhile, newly-acquired striker Daniel Fonseca left after just a few weeks to join Nacional in his native Uruguay. The former Juventus player suffered from the fact that River have too many strikers, failing to secure a first-team place. He also realised his contract was not as lucrative as he expected since it was to be paid in pesos, recently devalued, as opposed to dollars.

Martin Cardetti, the club's leading scorer last season, is also out of the picture, at least for the time being, having apparently fallen out with coach Ramon Diaz.

The recent upsurge in hooliganism, which led to three deaths in February, meant 1,370 police officers were on duty to control the 51,000 crowd at the Boca-River game. And while there were no major incidents there, hooliganism, or at least the threat of it, has continued to overshadow proceedings elsewhere. Two Rosario Central supporters gangs are currently engaged in a kind of civil war, making more headlines than the news that former national coach Cesar Menotti has taken charge of the club, where he began his playing career.

River rapture...Esteban Cambiasso celebrates putting his side ahead against Boca Juniors

Gimnasia y Esgrima de La Plata were the surprise side of the early part of the closing championship. They lay second having benefited from changing their style of play under new coach Carlos Ramacciotti. Gimnasia finished runners-up in the 1995 and 1996 closing championships, and in the 1998 opening championship, but have failed to impress since then.

Opening champions Racing Club are also enjoying a resurgence after making a disastrous start to the closing campaign. They were up to third place having taken only a point from their first three games.

Cash crises continue to plague Argentina's clubs. At San Lorenzo, an audit revealed that their debts now total £35m. The club have virtually only gate money coming in since previous president Fernando Miele – whom the club are taking to court – has already collected payments in advance for TV rights and sponsorship deals, in some cases up to 2009.

San Lorenzo have been forced to sell or loan out players, owe £1.4m in salaries, and on top of that are set to lose Chilean coach Manuel Pellegrini in June, possibly to take charge of Chile's national team.

Another danger facing clubs is that players owed two months' salary can declare themselves free of contract. San Lorenzo captain Horacio Ameli has already done so, swiftly followed by Velez Sarsfield's Patricio Camps. The only thing stopping an exodus is that many players fear they would not find a new club.

Velez Sarsfield, one of the country's biggest clubs, were left without electricity and had their phones cut off for not paying the bills. Velez also wanted to offload veteran midfielder Jose Basualdo with immediate effect, in order to save money. The 38-year-old former international, whose contract ends in June, refused. In response, Velez banned him from training with the rest of the squad and refused to supply him with kit.

River Plate's nickname, the Millionarios, is an ironic reminder of the days when they did have money to spend. At the end of a recent home game, Ariel Ortega exchanged shirts with an opponent. Seeing the incident, the River kit man ran to the visitors' changing-room to retrieve the item because there was a shortage of stock.

At Talleres, Cordoba's biggest club, the lights were cut off, though not because the bill was unpaid. In fact, the electricity company discovered an illegal connection that allowed the club to take power straight from the network, bypassing the meter.

After winning the opening title, heavily-in-debt Racing Club staged a celebration at their stadium, including a match, with the players allowed a share of the proceeds, minus expenses. During the event, the players were handed token medals by the club. Later, when the accounts were compiled, they found to their anger that half the cost of the medals had been deducted from their share of the money.

Happy retirement...Hermosillo looks on as Maradona embraces Zamorano at the Mexican's farewell game

MEXICO

Toluca a class apart

WITH two-thirds of the Summer League regular season played, none of the eight play-off spots had been filled. However, Toluca, clear at the top of Group 2, looked certain to be one of the qualifiers.

Ricardo Lavolpe's side have been the class act so far, with Rafael Garcia and Jose Cardozo the stars of the show.

Other sides are not faring so well, with the likes of America, Santos and Atletico Morelia paying the penalty in domestic competition for taking part in South American and CONCACAF club tournaments.

Some of those clubs may well find their resources even further stretched as their internationals are called away for duty with Mexico in the run-up to the World Cup.

Carlos Hermosillo has said farewell to his playing days at the age of 37, having scored 307 goals in a career spanning 18 years. He bowed out with a benefit match in front of a 50,000 capacity crowd at the Estadio Azul in Mexico City. The likes of Diego Maradona, Ivan Zamorano and Jurgen Klinsmann also appeared – though not Hermosillo's fellow Mexican Hugo Sanchez. He refused to attend the event, claiming it had received more domestic media attention than his own recent farewell match in Madrid.

Carlos Ramirez

Federation links with Argentinian minnows

BOLIVIA

BOLIVIA'S federation has made a groundbreaking move by signing a co-operation deal with a club from another country.

The federation has signed a contract with Puerto Nuevo, who play in Argentina's Metropolitan First Division D, the lowest regional division of the League structure. From next season, the club will be called Puerto Nuevo Boliviano and play in the green shirts of the Bolivian national team.

The club's new manager is former Bolivian international Milton Melgar, who knows Argentina well, having played for both its most popular clubs – River Plate and Boca Juniors. The idea is to exchange players with Bolivian clubs and also to use Puerto Nuevo as a 'shop window' for Bolivian talent – few scouts or player agents venture to Bolivia from Argentina.

Why was modest Puerto Nuevo chosen? There are three main reasons, one psychological. Landlocked Bolivia has always dreamed of having a port – in the 19th century the country even went to war with Chile to try to secure an outlet to the Pacific Ocean. Puerto Nuevo are based 60km from Buenos Aires in the city of Campana, which stands on the Parana River. This flows into the River Plate and, ultimately, the Atlantic Ocean.

Campana also lies in an area where there are a lot of Bolivian immigrants – an estimated one million live in Argentina in total. In addition, the virtually amateur First Division D has no limit on foreign players.

Next season, the team expect to use a lot of Bolivian players, some already based in Argentina, others brought in from Bolivian clubs.

Under the contract terms, the Bolivian federation will pay the club £2,500 a month – doubling their current income – plus a win bonus of £10 per player per victory. The federation's monthly payment will be more than doubled if, as seems likely, a Bolivian TV channel decides to televise the club's matches.

One exchange has already materialised. Melgar was captivated by the performances of Puerto Nuevo midfielder Horacio Falcon, a 21-year-old chalk factory worker. He has now gone on loan until the end of the year to top Bolivian club Independiente Petrolero, where he will earn £560 a month – far above his current salary.

Argentina has some 180 Bolivian community teams. Four ethnic clubs play in FA league championships – Deportivo Espanol, Deportivo Armenio, Sportivo Italiano and Centro Espanol. The first three have all played in the top division, though none remains there now.

Puerto Nuevo need four promotions to get to the top flight, and Melgar says he is dreaming of the day.

Eric Weil

Leaner – and meaner?

Paul Gardner previews the new slimline MLS season

USA

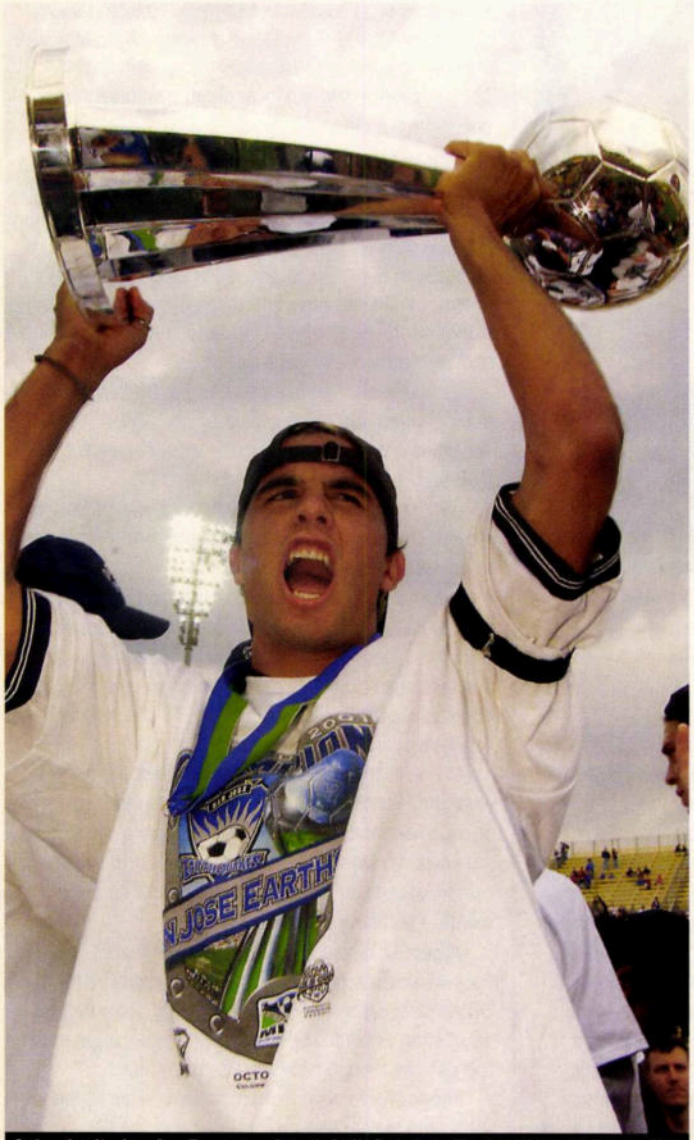
MLS played the 2001 season with 12 teams. This year it is down to 10. Is it shrinking towards extinction?

Nonsense, says commissioner Don Garber. "I know that there are many out there who think this is the end of Major League Soccer. And I want to say that this could not be further from the truth. In fact, we feel that this is a new and strong beginning."

Deputy commissioner Ivan Gazidis added: "There's no question in my mind that competitively on the field this year we will have a much stronger League than we had last year."

Well, they would say that, wouldn't they? Yet as far as the playing strength of each team is concerned, it makes sense. When Miami Fusion and Tampa Bay Mutiny were folded earlier this year, all their players were put into a dispersal draft. The other 10 clubs picked them over, thus acquiring players who could expect to immediately claim starting roles.

The reduction from 12 to 10 clubs has also meant a realignment from three four-team divisions (Eastern, Central and Western) to two five-team conferences – Eastern and Western.



Going for it...Landon Donovan aims to help San Jose Earthquakes retain the title

The contraction, of course, springs from a shortage of money. The League continues to lose money, and fiscal caution is the watchword. Listen to commissioner Garber on what MLS must do to be more successful. "We have our finger on the pulse," he says. "We pretty much know what the formula is and now we just have to figure out if we can afford it."

A penurious approach that was reflected in the announcements of new player signings for 2001– the list was short and did not include any big names.

During 2001 MLS lost two of its investors: the multi-billion dollar MetroMedia corporation and the Florida millionaire Ken Horowitz. It is left now with the Hunt family (investor-operators in Columbus and Kansas City) and the Kraft family (New England).

The League itself operates Dallas, and of the remaining six clubs, Phil Anschutz is the investor-operator for five (DC United, Chicago, Colorado, Los Angeles and MetroStars) and a co-investor in the sixth (San Jose). No one believes it is healthy to have so many clubs controlled by one man. But the alternative is stark: no League.

To his credit, Anschutz is taking an active interest in the League, and it is his money and drive behind the building of a new soccer centre near Los Angeles (including a stadium for the city's Galaxy team).

The ground-breaking for that stadium was barely completed when MLS got a nasty shock. In McKinney, near Dallas, everything had seemed to be on course for a new stadium for Burn after the city council voted unanimously in favour of the project. However, things suddenly came off the rails, and the council reversed its position. No stadium, it said, preferring to invest in fields for youth soccer.

But a few days before MLS kicked off its seventh season, some good news arrived at last. The long-running and costly lawsuit brought against MLS by a group of players, challenging its single entity structure, was slapped down for the second time – this time by the appeals court.

CHICAGO FIRE

The biggest problem for Fire has been finding somewhere to play while Soldier Field is undergoing a two-year renovation. The solution is hardly ideal: the stadium of North Central College in Naperville, 25 miles west of Chicago, where the pitch is artificial and the locals worry about the effect of soccer crowds on their quality of life. Inspirational captain Peter Nowak will be back (at 37), along with Hristo Stoichkov (36). There are youngsters, too – the team have some of the most skilful in the League: DaMarcus Beasley (20), Josh Wolff (25), plus newly signed 17-year-old midfielder Craig Capano.

● Championship potential – but only if they can overcome a distressing tendency to get involved in on-field 'incidents'.

COLORADO RAPIDS

Rapids got the first pick in the dispersal draft of former Miami and Tampa players, and coach Tim Hankinson used it to snap up defender-midfielder Pablo Mastroeni, certainly one of the most promising and versatile of young American players. Another valuable acquisition is midfielder Mark Chung, traded from the MetroStars, where he never settled down. Things didn't work out so well with Nigerian international Daniel Amokachi, who came for a trial but was sent home after only a few days because he was decidedly out of shape. His exit means the team will depend heavily for goals on last year's leading scorer, Scotsman John Spencer (14 goals, 7 assists).

● Not enough depth to sustain a title challenge.

COLUMBUS CREW

It has not been a spectacular off-season for Crew, who have no notable player signings to report. The dispersal draft brought in only two journeymen

DC key...Jaime Moreno

defenders, Brian Dunseth and Eric Denton. After some equivocation, veteran John Harkes decided to re-sign with MLS, and, at 35, will no doubt be the heart and soul of the team's midfield. Harkes' non-stop running game seems to fit well with Crew's claim to be "America's hardest-working team". Forward Brian McBride is their main scoring threat – but losing him to the national team during the World Cup could be a heavy blow.

● Team spirit will no doubt be the strong point, but a strong championship challenge needs more than that.

DALLAS BURN

Coach Mike Jeffries admits that his defence needs strengthening. Czech international Lubos Kubik has retired, but another foreign veteran – 31-year-old ex-Arsenal defensive midfielder Steve Morrow – has arrived. Midfielder Josh Keller looked like a good pick from the dispersal draft, but the 27-year-old promptly announced his retirement. Liberia-born defender Chris Gbandi was the No 1 pick from the college draft, but a persistent injury may hurt his chances of securing a starting berth. Goalkeeping problems have probably been solved by the signing of DJ Countess, at 20 the most promising of the next generation of American keepers. The Burn attack will need goals from Salvadorean Ronald Cerritos, brought in from San Jose Earthquakes in exchange for top scorer Ariel Graziani.

● Talented, but they have to find the consistency that was lacking last season.

DC UNITED

Last year's coach, Thomas Rongen, found himself out of a job after the team failed to make last year's play-offs. Replacing him is Englishman Ray Hudson, formerly with the now defunct Miami Fusion. The hope is that Bolivians Marco Etcheverry and Jaime Moreno, the two key players in DC's glory years, can regain form after long-term injuries. Player additions are goalkeeper Nick Rimando (ex-Miami) and attacking full-back Milton Reyes, from Honduras.

● Still suffering from last season's immaturity problems, the result of offloading too many veterans.

KANSAS CITY WIZARDS

Wizards welcomed home veteran Preki – who had been so important in their 2000 championship season and had then been traded to Miami. Last year,

Wizards way...coach Bob Gansler

Preki got his revenge when he helped Miami knock Wizards out of the play-offs. When Miami folded, Wizards coach Bob Gansler swallowed his pride and re-signed the 38-year-old midfielder. Another prize capture was defender Diego Gutierrez (obtained in a trade from Chicago), one of the liveliest and most dangerous attacking full-backs in the League.

● Solid but not champion material.

LOS ANGELES GALAXY

"We're getting a forward who is young, who is still hungry, who still wants to achieve more things in soccer." So said coach Sigi Schmid on the signing of Guatemalan striker Carlos Ruiz. His statement underlined all the qualities he felt last year's star signing – Mexican Luis Hernandez – did not possess. Hernandez has gone, but despite Schmid's barbed comment, the Mexican did well enough for Galaxy, helping them to reach the championship Final, and scoring their goal in the 2-1 defeat by Earthquakes. Without him, Galaxy are a duller team; the acquisition in the dispersal draft of defender Tyrone Marshall and forward Chris Albright will not change that.

● Ruiz will have to have a lot of influence if Galaxy are to improve on last season's second-place finish.

METROSTARS

When coach Octavio Zambrano picked forward Diego Serna in the dispersal draft, he undoubtedly obtained the League's most exciting player. He also took a risk, for Serna carries a weighty reputation for indiscipline. His arrival, to join Clint Mathis and Petter Villegas, promises to make MetroStars the League's most explosive team. The defence lacks experience – hence Zambrano's vain attempt to sign ex-England international Des Walker. But Ghanaian international Joseph Addo and USA veteran Marcelo Balboa (who arrived with a knee injury) have been added. Tab Ramos has announced that this will be his last season.

● If defensive and disciplinary problems can be solved, MetroStars are in with a shot at the title.

NEW ENGLAND REVOLUTION

Unrecognisable. That's the word for the 2002 Revolution, the team that was most active at the dispersal draft to the point that they acquired seven new players who can expect to claim starting places. Included are Alex Pineda Chacon (League top scorer in 2001 with 19 goals) and Mamadou Diallo (League top scorer in 2000 with 26), US national team defender Carlos Llamosa, plus midfielders Steve Ralston and Jim 'I-like-to-get-stuck-in' Rooney.

● Coach Fernando Clavijo has brought in a lot of talent, but the question is how quickly he can concoct a team out of it.

Bright young Galaxy...Carlos Ruiz

SAN JOSE EARTHQUAKES

If it ain't broke, don't fix it should apply here. Coach Frank Yallop has made few changes to the champions – the most significant being the trading of Ronald Cerritos for Dallas goalscorer Ariel Graziani. Another forward, the promising 19-year-old Devin Barclay, was taken in the dispersal draft.

● Definitely capable of retaining the championship, but the absence, on World Cup duty, of Jeff Agoos and Landon Donovan – two key players in last year's all-conquering team – will be a big obstacle.

Oak felled early again

Mark Gleeson reviews the first round of the African Champions League

GHANA's Hearts of Oak, the 2000 African Champions League winners, have been eliminated in the first round of the competition for the second successive year. Meanwhile, Cotonsport, the representatives from African Nations Cup holders Cameroon, also made an early exit from the continent's leading club competition.

Hearts were bundled out last year as defending champions in the first round by Etoile du Congo; this year they suffered the same indignity at the hands of Stade Malien, from the host country of the Nations Cup, Mali. To rub salt into the wound, Stade Malien are coached by one of the former icons of Ghanaian football, Abdul Razak, who won the African Footballer of the Year award in 1978.

Hearts were held 1-1 in the first leg at home in Accra and then slumped 3-1 in the return in Bamako.

Etoile du Congo matched their giantkilling feat of 2001 with success again this year, winning 1-0 away at Cotonsport in the first leg with the goal scored after just two minutes. A 1-1 draw at home in Brazzaville in the return was good enough to see them through and deny Cameroon further representation in the Champions League.

The field for this year's competition is arguably among the strongest ever, but several of the early favourites had to sweat through the first round. Holders Al Ahly of Egypt recorded an unconvincing 2-1 first leg win over Oserian Fastac of Kenya in Cairo. Khaled Bebo, the hat-trick hero of last year's Final, secured the victory with an injury-time goal. But goalkeeper Essam Al-Hadary was most responsible for ensuring Al Ahly's progress, making some brilliant stops in the second leg to secure a goalless draw in Nairobi.

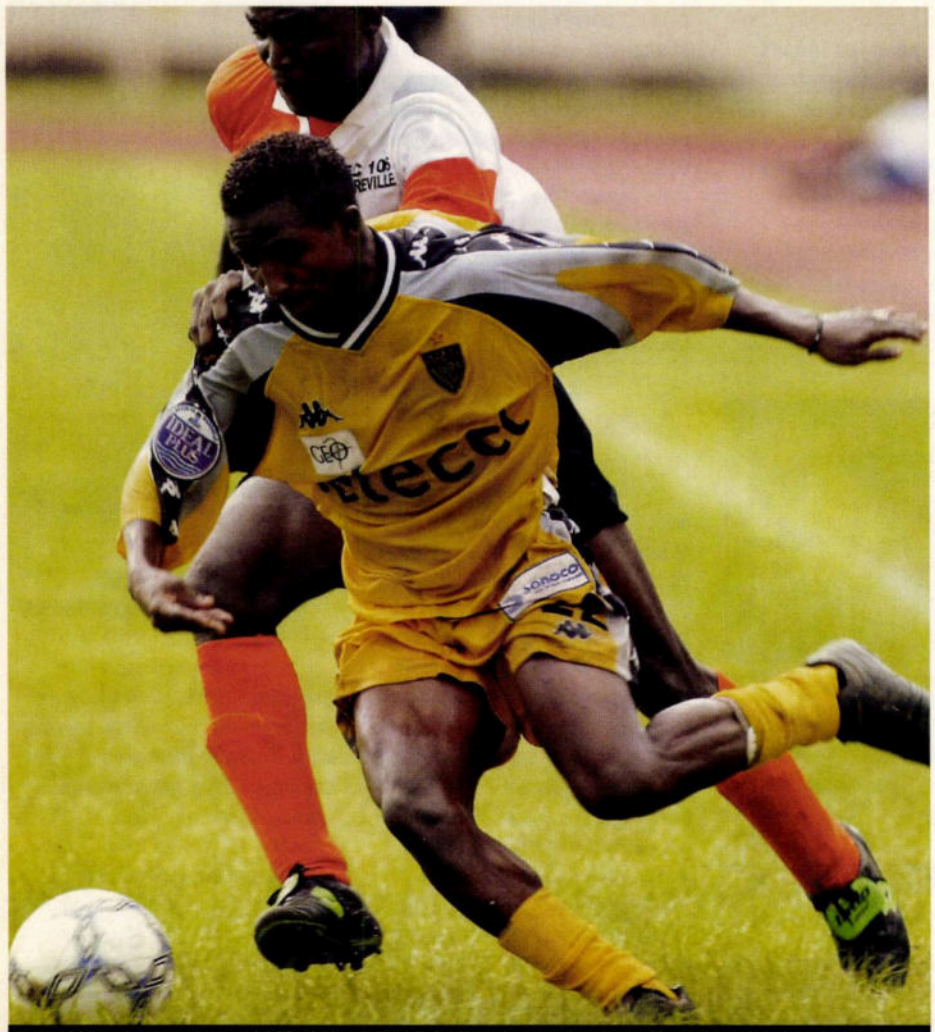
The 1999 winners Raja Casablanca were also far from convincing in the first leg of their tie against Gambian minnows Wallidan. The Moroccans won only 2-1 at home to leave themselves under severe threat in the return game. However, Senegalese striker Mohamed Ali Diallo, the top scorer in the Moroccan League this season, scored twice inside four minutes midway through the second half to ensure Raja were spared any blushes. Raja eventually won 3-1 in Banjul to go through 5-2 on aggregate.

South Africa's Orlando Pirates were also precariously placed after the opening game, at home to Reunion side St Louisienne. However, they managed to extend their 2-1 first leg lead into a 4-1 aggregate triumph after winning 2-0 away on the French-controlled island.

ASEC Abidjan are among the other previous title holders who progressed, but they had no trouble against FC 105 Libreville of Gabon. The Ivorians went through 8-2 on aggregate.

Esperance of Tunisia won by the same aggregate scoreline against Tourbillon of Chad, who were way out of their depth.

Only the eight sides who qualify from the second round are entitled to a share of the Champions League's £2.5million marketing and television revenue for this season. The tournament winners are guaranteed £700,000.



No problem...former winners ASEC Abidjan beat Libreville 8-2 on aggregate in the Champions League first round

Chiefs kicked out

KAIZER CHIEFS, the holders of the African Cup-winners Cup, have been kicked out of this year's tournament after failing to turn up for the second leg of their first round tie against Madagascan newcomers US Transfoot.

The fate of the South African club, who won their first continental trophy last December, was decided by the Confederation of African Football's club competition committee. They rejected Chiefs' reasons for not travelling to the second leg on the Indian Ocean island.

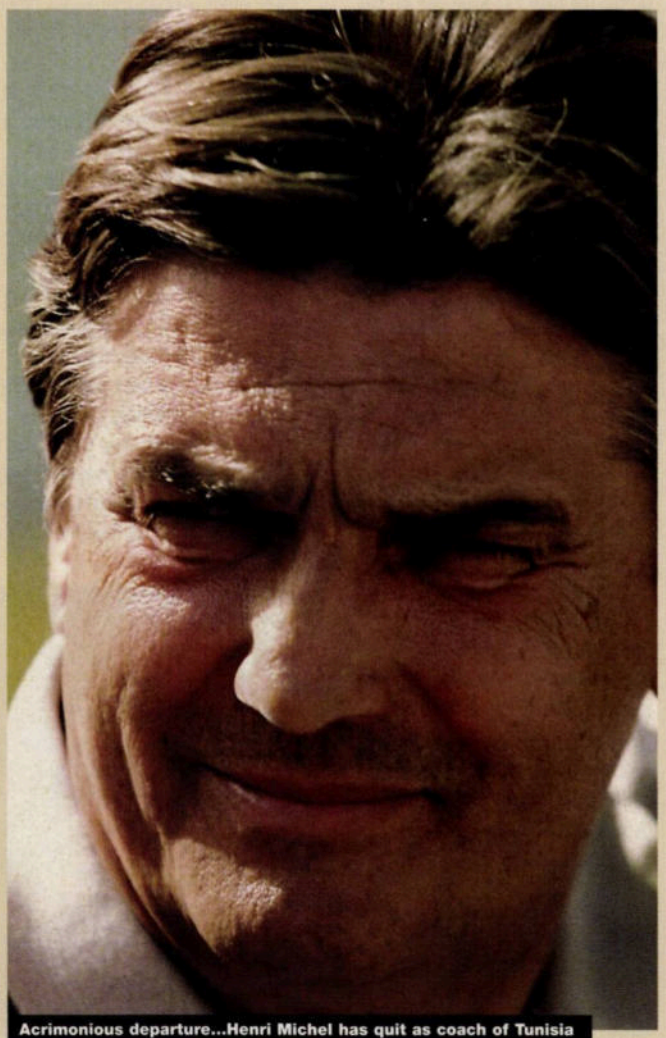
Madagascar has been the scene of political turmoil since December after the hotly contested presidential election proved inconclusive. The airport in the capital, Antananarivo, has been closed several times and earlier in the month the Cosafa Castle Cup match between Madagascar and Mauritius was moved from Antananarivo to Mauritius.

Chiefs, who won the first leg 4-0 in Johannesburg, claimed they had been unable to secure flights to the Malagasy capital because flight schedules had been drastically reduced. They asked for a postponement but were refused by CAF. The governing body has traditionally been lenient to teams with travel problems because erratic flight schedules and delays are often experienced in Africa. But Chiefs' expulsion can be interpreted as a stern example to other clubs as CAF president Issa Hayatou seeks a firmer leadership image going into May's FIFA presidential election.

The South Africans were also likely to be fined and given a mandatory three-year ban from competing in African club competition. This would cost them very dear, especially if in future years they were to qualify for the lucrative African Champions League.

Mark Gleeson

Michel the biggest faller



Acrimonious departure...Henri Michel has quit as coach of Tunisia

THE managerial fallout after the African Nations Cup finals in **MALI** has continued following the departure from the host nation of coach Henryk Kasperczak and the sacking of **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO** boss Louis Watunda.

More significant was the departure of Henri Michel as coach of World Cup finalists **TUNISIA** just weeks ahead of the tournament. Michel, who would have gone to a fourth World Cup with a fourth different team, cited intolerable working conditions, linked to the decision by the Tunisian federation to replace his assistant, Albert Rust, with two local coaches.

Kasperczak, who took Mali to fourth place in the Nations Cup, has returned to his native Poland to take charge of Wisla Krakow, while Watunda is replaced by one of his assistants, Mukeba Mulamba. The latter had a brief spell in charge of the Simbas last year during the World Cup qualifiers and most recently has been coach of Lubumbashi club TP Mazembe. They have won the championship in DR Congo for the past two years.

DR Congo were quarter-finalists at the Nations Cup finals in Mali but spent more than £700,000 in preparation costs, staging training camps in South Africa, Belgium, Turkey and Burkina Faso before the start of the finals in January.

Defending Cosafa Castle Cup champions **ANGOLA** have a new coach for this year's campaign, appointing the Brazilian Ishmael Kurtz to replace Mario Calado. It is the second appointment in Africa for Kurtz, who took Ghana to fourth place at the 1996 African Nations Cup finals in South Africa. Kurtz is also a former coach of Rio de Janeiro club Fluminense.

It was a surprise that Calado was replaced at all given his success in last year's southern African championship. Angola won away in Harare to beat Zimbabwe 1-0 on aggregate in the Final.

Kurtz is the second Brazilian to take charge of the 'Palancas Negras' after Djalma Cavalcante, who helped Angola win their first Cosafa Castle Cup title in 1999.

Frenchman Ladislas Lozano, who won fame by taking amateur club Calais to the 2000 French Cup Final, has been fired as coach of Wydad Casablanca, less than a year after joining the **MOROCCAN** club.

CAMEROON'S African Nations Cup-winning squad have all been decorated by the country's president, Paul Biya, after February's success in Mali. Three players – Patrick Mboma, Geremi Njitap and Pierre Wome – were all given the country's highest honour, Grand Commander of the Order of Valeur, upgrading previous decorations awarded after triumphs at the Olympic Games and Nations Cup in 2000.

The footballers were joined at the medal ceremony in Yaounde by Cameroon's volleyballers, who are also African champions, and athletes who won medals at the 2001 Francophone Games, organised by Canada.

Three more countries announced their candidacy to host the 2006 **AFRICAN NATIONS CUP** finals by the March 31 extended deadline. Ivory Coast, Libya and Namibia added their names to the list of four candidates – Algeria, Egypt, Gabon and South Africa – who had submitted their applications by the original deadline of November 30. The deadline was mysteriously extended by CAF president Issa Hayatou.

Namibia's candidacy is contingent on South Africa's potential withdrawal from the race, already announced by their association officials but not yet communicated to CAF. Senegal also said they wanted to bid but CAF said no documents had been submitted by the March 31 deadline.

Highest honour...Patrick Mboma

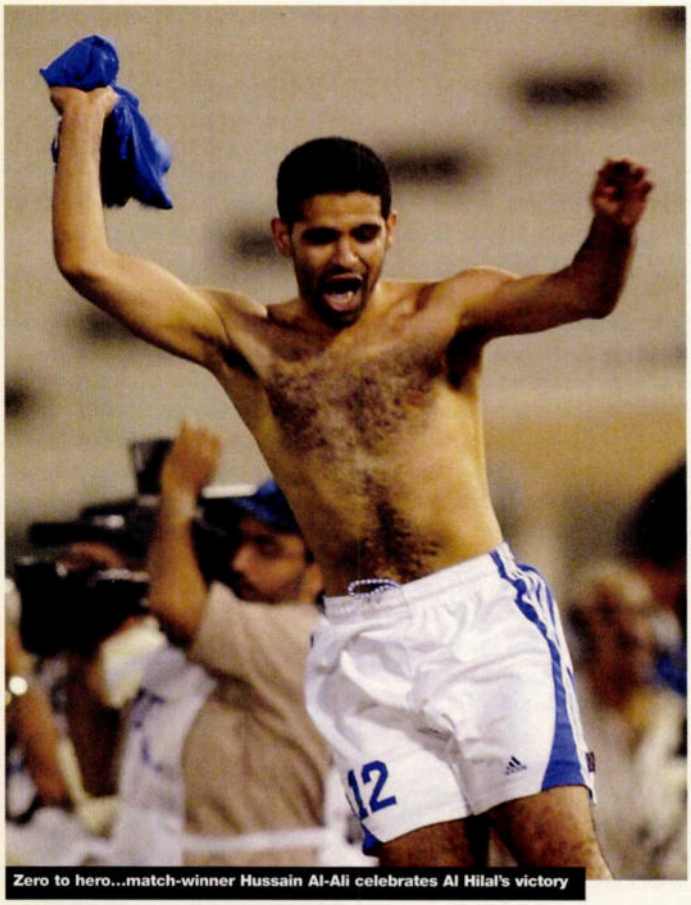
The decision on hosting rights will be taken by CAF's executive committee in September.

Stade Tunisien won the **ARAB CUP-WINNERS CUP** competition, beating Al Hilal of Sudan 3-1 in the Final in Tunis.

Mark Gleeson

Al Hilal reign on

Michael Church sees the Saudis lift the Asian Cup-winners Cup



Zero to hero...match-winner Hussain Al-Ali celebrates Al Hilal's victory

SAUDI ARABIA'S Al Hilal continued to dominate Asian club football as they lifted the Cup-winners Cup once again in Doha. The Riyadh-based side won the trophy for the second time with a 2-1 victory over South Korea's Chonbuk Hyundai in the Final. Hussain Al-Ali was the villain then hero, missing a penalty before hitting the extra-time golden goal winner, in what was the last edition of the tournament.

Next season sees the introduction of the Asian Champions League, which merges the Cup-winners Cup with the Asian Club Championship.

Al Hilal had previously lifted the Cup-winners Cup in 1996. The Saudis have also twice won the Asian Club Championship – the region's premier club title – in 1991 and 2000, and the Asian Super Cup, in 1997 and 2000.

Al Hilal captain Sami Al-Jaber collected the trophy despite being suspended from the Final after being sent off during the semi-final against Qatar's Al Saad. Al-Jaber was dismissed for using foul and abusive language to Al Saad and ex-Al Hilal coach Ilie Balacci. Meanwhile, the Qataris had two players sent off during the stormy tie, which Al Hilal won with a goal from Brazilian Edmilson.

In the other semi, two goals from Chonbuk's Park Seong-bae saw off China's Chongqing, who were playing in their first continental competition. But the Koreans were unable to match their Saudi counterparts in Doha, the Qatari capital. Edmilson struck again to give Al Hilal the lead in the 12th minute after Mohammed Al-Shlhoob's corner was knocked into the Brazilian's path by Asian Player of the Year Nawaf Al-Temyat.

The Koreans equalised with 15 minutes left when Julio Cesar Vieira converted a penalty after Al Hilal right-back Turki Suwaileh pulled down Park Dong-hyuk.

Al Hilal had a great chance to win the game two minutes from time when they too were awarded a penalty, but Al-Ali shot wide. However, in extra time the same player had a second chance to give Al Hilal the glory, and this time he made no mistake, heading home Al-Temyat's cross.

JAPAN

Jubilo start in style

JUBILO IWATA showed they are fired up for the new J.League season by recording three straight wins. They finished 17 points ahead of Kashima Antlers at the top of the overall 2001 League table, but lost out to their rivals in the championship play-off. The early message is they are determined not to lose out this time.

"We still have some fine-tuning to do but it is important to start on a winning note," said coach Masakazu Suzuki. "We can now work on our problems in a positive spirit."

Those problems include the continuing absence of Hiroshi Nanami, the 2000 Asian Cup Player of the Tournament, who has been troubled by a knee injury, and the transfer of national team midfielder Daisuke Oku and striker Norihisa Shimizu to Yokohama F Marinos. However, Naohiro Takahara is looking sharp after returning from Boca Juniors.

Suzuki has reorganised the team this year around the ever-solid Takashi Fukunishi. He is now played at the centre of a three-man defensive midfield line, compared with two defensive midfielders last year.

Jubilo's surprise rivals at the top were top-flight debutants Vegalta Sendai. They squeezed into Division One only on the final day of last season but have made a number of solid signings, including present and former national team players Norio Omura from Yokohama F Marinos, Yoshiteru Yamashita from Avispa Fukuoka and Hajime Moriyasu from Sanfrecce Hiroshima. Coach Hidehiko Shimizu, a veteran at 47, led Marinos to the Asian Cup-winners Cup a decade ago and has also coached Avispa Fukuoka and Kyoto Purple Sanga.

Mike Plastow & Yumiko Nagae

AUSTRALIA

Tide turns for Lakesiders

PERTH GLORY were convincing winners of the National Soccer League's regular season stage, ensuring top spot with several games to spare. Newcastle United were also assured of a place in the six-team championship play-offs, with Sydney Olympic almost certain to join them.

As a consequence, the race for the three other play-off berths has been the main focus of attention during the closing weeks.

South Melbourne were the form horse among the seven clubs still in contention. Last season's beaten finalists were bottom at the beginning of the year, but an unbeaten run of 10 matches thrust them into sixth spot with three games to play.

The Lakesiders' purple patch began immediately after international midfielder Con Boutsianis rejoined them following a brief and unhappy stint at Auckland Kingz. However, Boutsianis' transfer may well prove to be South Melbourne's undoing. Kingz contend that the Lakesiders reneged on an agreement not to field him during a match between the two clubs in January, when he scored a late winner.

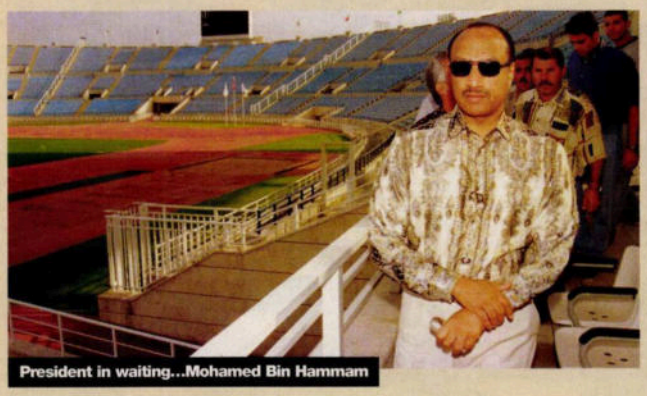
Kingz controversy...Boutsianis

New Zealand Soccer is to take the matter to FIFA on its compatriots' behalf, with the aim of getting the result reversed. The three points at stake could be important to the Kingz, too, as they battle to avoid the wooden spoon.

Harry Kewell finished four points ahead of Mark Viduka, his team-mate with both Leeds United and Australia, to win the 2001 Oceania Footballer of the Year poll.

Paul Moon

Round-up


President in waiting...Mohamed Bin Hammam

ASIA

QATAR'S Mohamed Bin Hammam will take over as president of the **ASIAN FOOTBALL CONFEDERATION** in August after his nomination for the post went unopposed. No other candidates put themselves forward by the March closing date for nominations, allowing the 52-year-old to take over from Sultan Ahmed Shah of Malaysia at the next confederation congress.

Hammam, also a FIFA executive committee member, had the backing of 37 of the AFC's 43 associations.

The news comes at a time when Hammam was dragged into the controversy over Sepp Blatter's ascension to the FIFA presidency in Paris in 1998. The Qatari businessman is alleged to have funded Blatter's campaign illicitly. The allegations were made by Somalia's Farrah Addo, but have been denied by Hammam.

Brazilian striker Egmar Goncalves has been granted **SINGAPOREAN** citizenship, making the 31-year-old eligible to play for the island's national side. Goncalves, who has been with Home United since the birth of Singapore's S-League in 1996, became the first player to score 100 League goals last year.

Two goals by Farhad helped Chittagong Division become the new champions in the **BANGLADESH** Games football tournament. Chittagong beat Bangladesh Army 2-1 in the Final.

Northern state Perak led **MALAYSIA'S** 14-team Premier League with 18 points after eight rounds.

Two Selangor Public Bank players, Premkumar and Rajkumar, were suspended for six matches for brawling after a Premier Two match.

Michael Church & Azam Mahmood

OCEANIA

PAPUA NEW GUINEA qualified for this year's Oceania Nations Cup finals by winning a preliminary tournament in Apia, Samoa. But there is still confusion over whether runners-up **NEW CALEDONIA** will join them.

The Oceania Football Confederation's executive committee will be convened to determine whether New Caledonia, who have yet to gain FIFA membership, are eligible to participate. Should they be given the green light, the New Caledonians will face Australia, Fiji and Vanuatu in Group A of the tournament, to be staged in Auckland in July. New Zealand, Solomon Islands, Tahiti and Papua New Guinea contest Group B.

Kiwi won **SAMOA'S** pre-season tournament with a 2-1 victory over Togafuafua in the Final.

Ba's hopes of a second successive unbeaten **FIJIAN** League campaign ended when Nadroga beat them 2-0. The Blacks were still top, but unheralded Navua were just one point behind with a game in hand.

In **NEW ZEALAND**, a 4-1 defeat by last year's beaten grand finalists, Miramar Rangers, shattered Napier City Rovers' unbeaten record. Rovers remained top, though only on goal difference, from newly-promoted North Shore United.

Paul Moon

PUBLICATIONS

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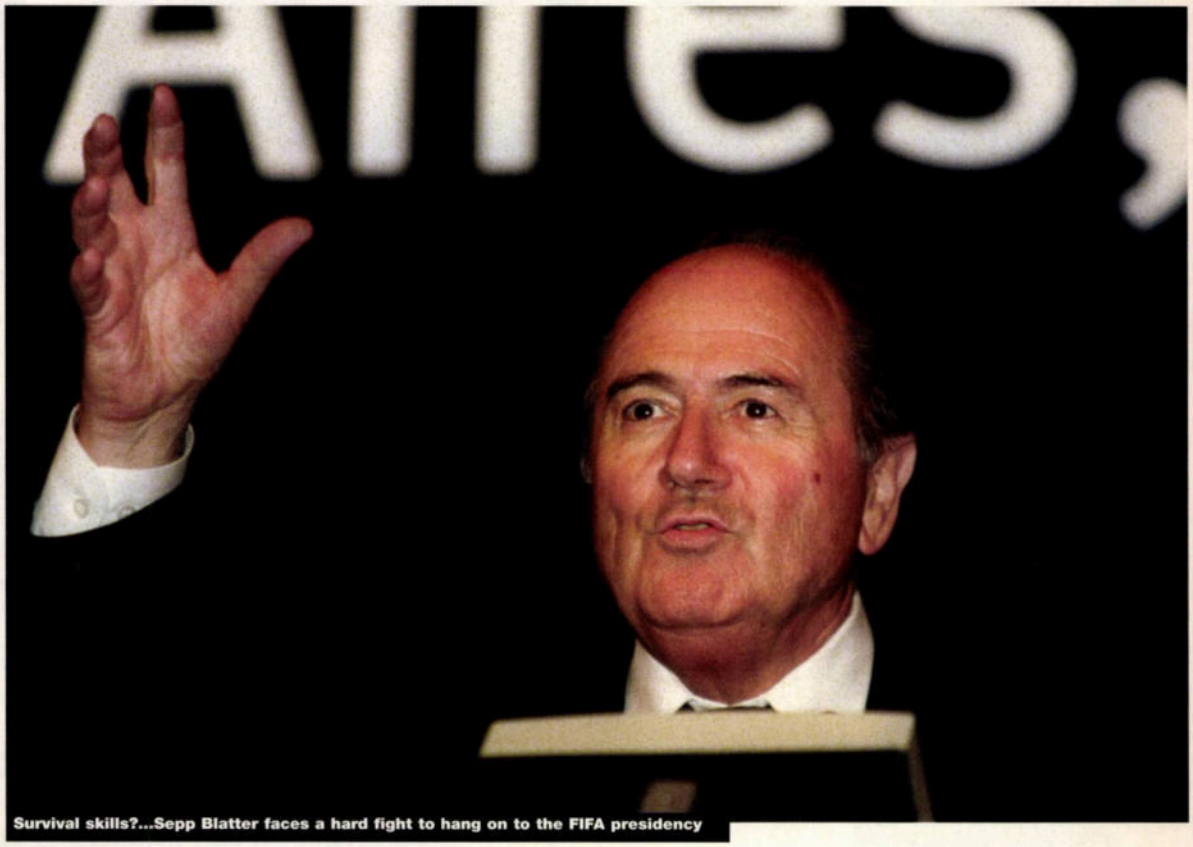
WORLD SOCCER

Brian Glanville's LAST WORD

'If Blatter is not voted out in Seoul, then UEFA should call his bluff by withdrawing from FIFA'



Survival skills?...Sepp Blatter faces a hard fight to hang on to the FIFA presidency

The game is up for Blatter

CAN Sepp Blatter survive in Seoul? Surely not, but then you never can tell. Slippery-slimy machinations did work horribly well in the dire 24-year reign of Joao Havelange, his predecessor as FIFA president. It may ultimately come down to how many rats leave the putatively sinking ship, having gorged themselves in the meanwhile.

Blatter continues to bluster and prevaricate, but his survival depends not on any committee but on the FIFA Congress, with its quantum of sycophants, opportunists and mendicants, snouts firmly in the trough.

Yes, the evidence against Blatter and his regime is devastating. In addition to the recent allegations of bribery regarding the 1998 presidential election, the so-called Goal project has been exposed as little more than a way to suborn Third World nations.

Against Blatter's bitter opposition, a sub-committee of good men and true – including the estimable David Will of Scotland – is investigating the morass of FIFA's finances. These were plunged into chaos by the collapse of the governing body's marketing partner, ISL, favoured by Blatter at a time when it was plainly headed for bankruptcy.

Blatter ridicules the claim that £220million has been lost in the ISL collapse; more objective estimates in turn ridicule his claim that the loss is a 'mere' £22m. The president is also accused of using funds allocated for the 2006 World Cup to plug the gap.

Havelange got away with it for so long because he followed the dictum of Sir Robert Walpole, the first British Prime Minister, that "every man has his price". Also, because he never did anything as foolish as Blatter with ISL – though the Brazilian did sell World Cup rights badly short.

Look, if you can bear it, at the obscurities, the footballing non-entities from countries of no soccer account, who crawl out of the woodwork to support Blatter. He may well be right to say that it is far too late to overturn his deeply controversial (a euphemism) election in 1998. But should he survive, thanks to the fatuous one country, one vote system, then the best thing UEFA could do is to withdraw from FIFA. This clearly is becoming a matter of urgency now that Blatter, at bay, has snarled his intentions: to diminish the role of UEFA to virtual impotence.

At present, UEFA, which provides 50 per cent of FIFA's TV income, enjoys a third of the places on the executive committee. "This is not good for the president," says Blatter; and amen to that. He therefore plans or threatens to give all six confederations a place, the rest to be selected by good old corruptible Congress.

It is clearly more important than ever that Blatter be voted out in Seoul. If not, then he should have his bluff called. If UEFA did withdraw from FIFA, the world body would simply collapse.

He who pays the piper is surely entitled to call the tune. Meanwhile, each week brings more evidence of the scandalous state of FIFA's finances. How long can this so far Teflon president survive? We must fervently hope that Issa Hayatou can defeat him.

● *Log on to Brian Glanville's weekly column – every Wednesday at www.worldsoccer.com*

Arsene and Alex: the feud continues

THE Kilkenny cats of Irish legend ended by swallowing one another. The continuing feud between Arsene Wenger and Alex Ferguson evokes the legend.

Chalk and cheese – the French sophisticate and the hugely successful manager who has risen from the Glasgow shipyards. Ferguson excoriates Wenger as the only Premiership manager who won't have a drink with him after a game and, with perhaps somewhat more reason, was appalled when Wenger supposedly failed to shake hands with him after Manchester United had beaten Arsenal.

There's little doubt that Ferguson's spleen has in part been engendered by the fact that, unlike Kevin Keegan in his days as Newcastle United manager, Wenger will never rise to the bait. Ferguson publicly and abrasively criticised him when, in the recent past, the Gunners boss disagreed with him over extending the season.

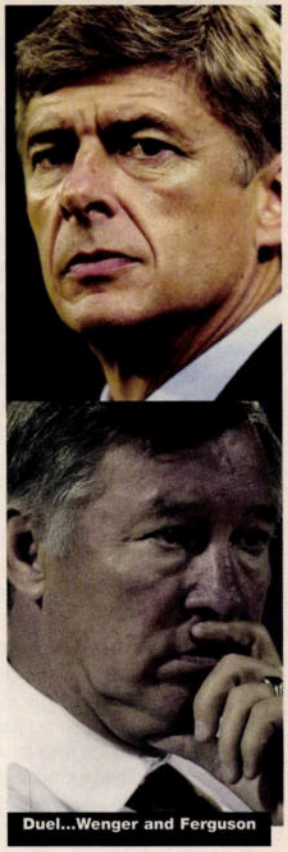
Confronted with Ferguson's charge that he won't join him for a drink, Wenger said dismissively: "I'll buy him a bottle of whisky." This moved a journalist defender of Ferguson to point out that the Scotsman has an educated taste in wines.

A few days earlier, in the same newspaper, a columnist took Wenger strongly to task over the palpable nonsense he had talked about trial by television, attributing to this the heavy suspensions suffered by such as Thierry Henry: three matches for his outburst against referee Graham Poll at the end of Arsenal's 3-1 defeat at Highbury by Newcastle in the Premiership.

You must still wonder whether the whole situation could have been defused had Wenger only stayed on the field, rather than disappearing down the tunnel. If he had been present, he could have exerted his great authority and prestige to restrain his striker.

The truth is that, for all his undoubted achievements at Highbury, Wenger has never got to grips with the disciplinary problems, and using TV as a scapegoat merely avoids the issue. Or tries to.

As for Ferguson, he is notoriously thin-skinned, and is a candidate for the offices of Mrs Do As You Would Be Done By. Witness his sharp criticisms of Brian Kidd (peevish to a degree) and Gordon Strachan (not without basis, but surely on the brink of libel) in that hugely successful autobiography.



Duel...Wenger and Ferguson

Double trouble...Le Saux and Taricco were both sent off

Palmer right to lay down the law

CARLTON PALMER has not always been a role model for the young professional, not least off the field. But you had to salute him when, some weeks ago, he heavily fined one of his Stockport players who had committed a shocking foul.

Would that all managers were as forthright. Would that, after those two bruising affairs within a few days between Spurs and Chelsea, Claudio Ranieri and Glenn Hoddle had not chosen to defend the indefensible – the dire challenges on each other that had Graeme Le Saux sent off at Tottenham, Mauricio Taricco at Stamford Bridge.

Both players have 'form'. One 'tackle' by Le Saux at Highbury against Arsenal was horrific. Yet can Le Saux's sporadic excesses relate to the disgusting abuse to which he is regularly subjected by foul-mouthed scum in the stands? This happened again in spades at the Bridge, yet for all the warnings clubs issue about foul language from spectators, no police or stewards intervened to sling out the morons responsible.

It may be in their eyes some kind of crime to drink wine and read *The Guardian*, but why this should imply sexual deviance is something beyond logic. This in turn evokes memories of the revolting provocation to which Le Saux was prey, again at the Bridge, from Robbie Fowler. Was it any surprise that Le Saux should then react?

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From the archives...

May 1981

BRAZIL were coming to Europe 21 years ago this month to show, in friendlies against England, France and West Germany, whether coach Tele Santana had successfully rebuilt the side after the disappointment of their 1978 World Cup campaign in Argentina.

Then, according to *World Soccer*, "[coach Claudio] Coutinho's attempt to add European stamina and speed to natural Brazilian flair and skill was a disaster. Coutinho was right in wanting to increase the tempo of Brazilian football – but went too far too fast. [Argentina coach] Cesar Menotti had the same idea in Argentina – and got the balance right."

The Brazilians, the issue's cover stars, went on to win all three of their friendlies but still failed to hit the heights in the following year's World Cup in Spain.

Mario Kempes, a key man for Argentina in the 1978 finals, had just moved back to his homeland and River Plate following a difficult spell at Valencia in Spain. The £1.7million fee was causing River, already in debt, to do some intricate financial juggling – this included "selling long-term leases on seats at their stadium to pay for the player". But they clearly felt they had to do something in response to the £5m purchase of Diego Maradona by arch-rivals Boca Juniors.

This move, from Argentinos Juniors, was the catalyst for a *World Soccer* investigation into the "world transfer spiral". FIFA assistant general secretary Rene Courte had called the situation "insane" and suggested that it could lead "to the end of professional football as we know it". But the magazine questioned whether, in fact, it was so dangerous for the game.

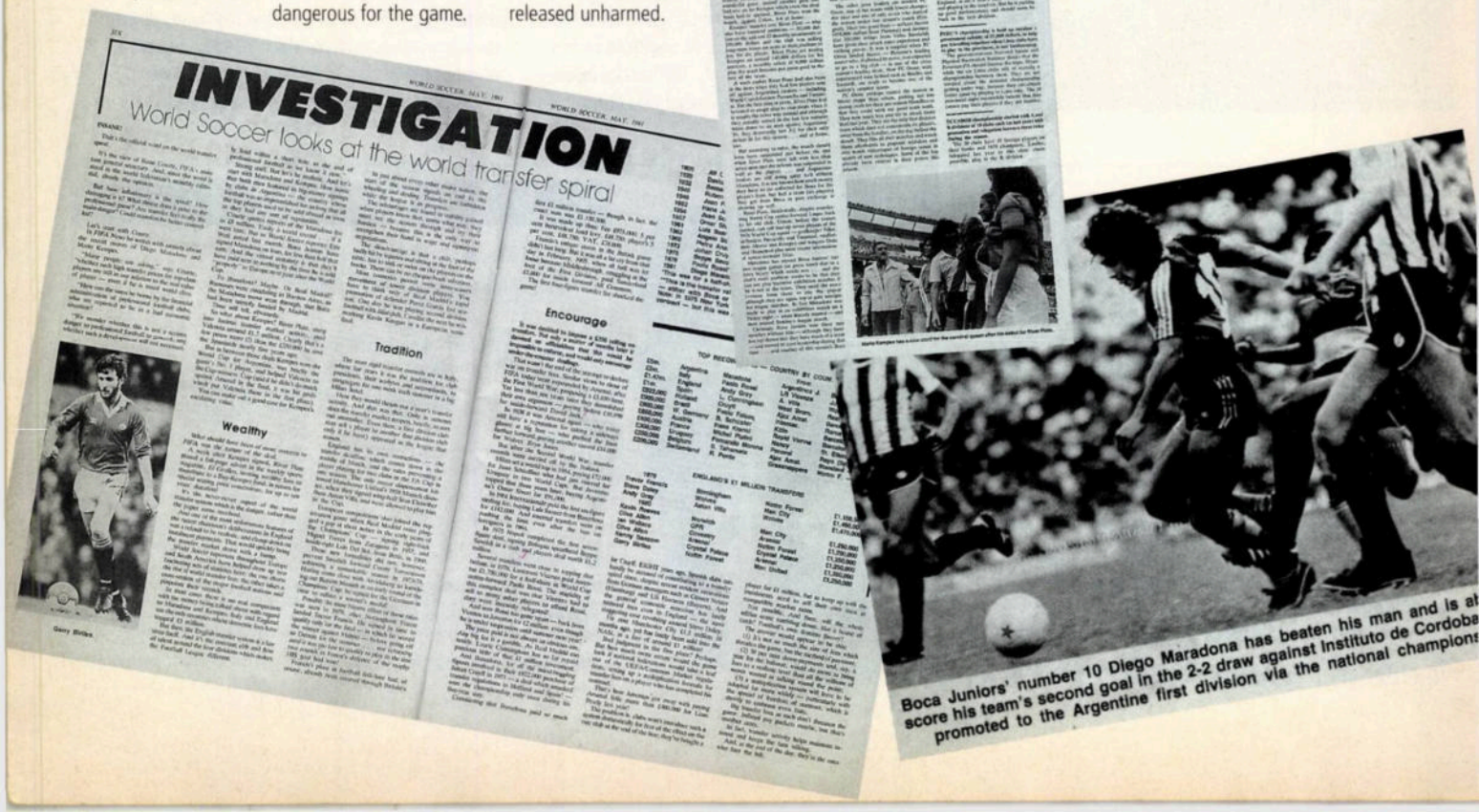
For a start, it queried the 'world record' £5m fee, saying: "Boca have signed Maradona on loan, for less than half that sum. And the virtual certainty is that they'll have paid next to nothing by the time he is sold 'properly' to Europe next year after the World Cup."

The article concluded: "Big transfer fees as such don't threaten the game. In fact, transfer activity helps maintain interest and keeps the fans talking. And, at the end of the day, they're the ones who foot the bill."

Elsewhere, there was a profile of Ipswich manager Bobby Robson, who was just about to lead his side to triumph in the UEFA Cup.

The 15th North American Soccer League season had just got under way following a stand-off with FIFA over the NASL's 35-yard offside line. The League eventually decided to toe the line and drop it.

In Spain, Barcelona coach Helenio Herrera was also apparently fighting a losing battle in his bid to have three games replayed. His case? Barça had lost two of the matches and drawn the other while their leading scorer, Quini, was being held captive by three men in a Zaragoza cellar. At least the centre-forward was released unharmed.



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